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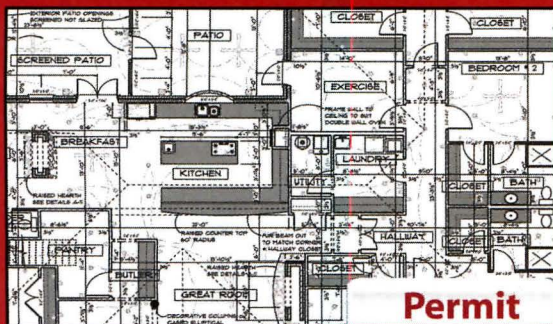
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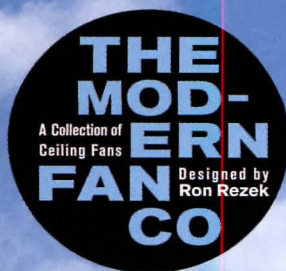
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Capturing the interstitial spaces between structural elements helps turn an urban lot into an urban oasis. Photo: Liam Frederick. Cover photo: Sharon Risedorph.

residential architect  
design awards

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## outside in

City sites still crave tranquil sights. Three infill houses across the country explore the limits of landscape between the tightest urban setback lines.

by Bruce D. Snider, Meghan Drueding, and  
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If you missed residential architect magazine's annual Reinvention Symposium, "The New, New Reality," our full online coverage at [www.residentialarchitect.com](http://www.residentialarchitect.com) will catch you up on the highlights.





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# work on your welcome

do potential clients turn away before they reach your door?

by s. claire conroy

I'm back in the office after a rousing Reinvention Symposium in Seattle. The subject of the conference

this year was "The New, New Reality." Many of our speakers focused their presentations on alternative practice models and proactive ways to keep good design opportunities in front of them, even while the economy continues to falter. It's obvious to them that the old ways of doing business are losing their effectiveness—if those methods were ever terribly effective in the first place.

No one has been untouched by the housing bust and the lending crisis, but it's always been especially tough for residential architects to get work, and tougher still for them to attract compelling, lucrative work. A large part of the problem is the mystery that shrouds what the profession actually does. Out of that mystery comes a great deal of intimidation and trepidation on the part of the lay public. Those of us on the inside of the business often forget what a leap it is for the uninitiated to muster the courage to call an architect for a remodeling job or a new house commission.

I have friends who write about architecture for established shelter magazines who are nonetheless hesitant to consult an architect for their own projects. They don't know whether they'll have to pay for that first meeting to discuss the project; they fear the architect will try to push his own design agenda; they're at a loss for how to express what they want—even though they're experts in translating an architect's design intent for a mainstream audience.

At Reinvention, our Rising Star Leadership Award winner—John Brown, RAIC, of housebrand [see pages 42–45 of our July/August 2009 issue]—was one of the most popular presenters. He shared his successful strategies for demystifying the design process for mainstream clients. One that especially resonated with me was his description of his "office." He doesn't have one.

Intuitively, he understood how scary it is for a would-be client to step foot into a traditional architect's office. It's not unlike a visit to the doctor, the lawyer, or the undertaker. The somber lobby area, the formal conference room—these signal to the outside world an irrevocable, possibly



Mark Robert Halper

painful journey ahead.

But what if potential clients felt free to come browse your work and learn more about what a residential architect does? Brown has a thorough website where some of this tire-kicking can occur, but he understands the importance of making it happen in person as well. So, instead of an office, he has a furniture store as his welcome mat. He displays design magazines and books that people can peruse in a comfortable, no obligation-to-buy environment. And he hosts public seminars there that address important topics on home design, with plenty of opportunities for people to ask questions.

One by one, this approach peels back the layers of resistance and fear. Ah, *this* is what an architect does and, hey, it's not just a solution and a service for the intrepid wealthy.

Maybe you can't open a furniture store as your place of business. But you can consider all of the physical and psychological impediments you unwittingly put between you and your next client. Take down some walls, literally and figuratively. Reach out instead of hunkering down. Be the first to extend the olive branch of welcome. **ra**

Comments? E-mail S. Claire Conroy at [cconroy@hanleywood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanleywood.com).



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# letters

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## fashionably gray

■ was very pleased to read your Doctor Spec article, "Gray Matters," in the May/June 2009 issue (pages 59–60).

It's important to remember that most of the negatives of water reuse—smell, contaminants, soap scum, and lack of clarity—can be avoided through the collection and reuse of rainwater, which provides a clean water source for toilet flushing. Toilets are usually the major source of indoor residential water usage—especially when one considers leakage from faulty flapper valves and Americans' propensity to flush after every use, which wastes one-third of our indoor drinking water.

For urban locations, where stormwater collection and retention are required but population density is much higher, reuse should be for irrigation—another major user of potable supplies. But in suburban and more rural areas, rainwater collection usually *isn't* required or provided, despite logic that would dictate otherwise.

In the home I designed for my family, the 1,600 square feet of roof area provides 100 gallons of usable water per inch of rainfall. Collection considerations during design

and a single collection point for our 1,000-gallon cistern were necessary initial considerations. It helps that we're on the Florida coast, which receives 50 inches of rainfall annually, but many locations fare almost as well.

Americans are water junkies, with usage far in excess of similar European nations. The design and enforcement communities *must* become more aware—especially now, during our current hiatus in growth and expansion—of the very real need to incorporate water conservation and management systems into everything that will be built in the future. Thank you for continuing to bring attention to this critical need.

*Carl Kaiserman, AIA  
Melbourne Beach, Fla.*

## reality check

■ don't know where the profession will be in the next 10 years, but I agree with your assessment in the January/February 2009 issue that a fundamental change in the practice and economics of architecture is on the way ("The New, New Reality," page 11). *Very* much more with less seems right.

The traditional role of the architect has been changing all along though.

I have been in the profession for 30 years, and letting go of the "old model" will be hard. Only a few lucky "starchitects" will be able to work that way. The scope of traditional practice has already been sliced and diced up by many sub-"professions" (kitchen/bath and lighting designers; roofing, energy, and green consultants; IAQ specialists; and so on).

Perhaps the new model is one in which the architect's initial role is to generate the project concept, letting the various specialists define the actual product. The architect's ongoing role, then, would be to coordinate the team and vet their proposed solutions to maintain design integrity. That would certainly reduce the time expended and increase the likelihood of profitability as a business. I don't think I like that idea, but it seems to be one possibility.

*Joe Nichols, AIA  
Joseph Nichols Architect  
San Diego*

■ believe your January/February editorial can help bring clarity and hope to new members of our profession, who have little knowledge of or experience with the realities of hard times.

Some of the world's most memorable, creative architecture was born during difficult economic times, because such moments demand new solutions if one is to survive in our profession. I hope the current generation of new and future architects and designers have the mettle to face adversity. I would hate to see them crushed under the weight of a staggering economic decline.

*Richard Bryant, AIA*

**Y**our January/February editorial captured beautifully the spirit of the times in which we live. But I don't necessarily agree that the recession is debilitating for creative souls. Most of the best works in art history were created in "dark night of the soul" or stimulated by some traumatic event.

The question is: Can we let go and be open to change, or will we fight to preserve the old order and prolong the agony?

*Krystyna Bukowiecki,  
LEED AP  
Kennesaw, Ga.*

*Letters may be edited for  
clarity and length.*



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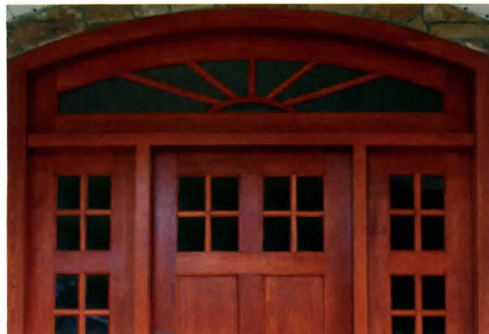
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# home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

## experiencing architecture

The Landmark Trust has long made it possible for devotees of Britain's traditional architecture to rent historic homes by the week. Soon the public will have a similar opportunity to experience top-flight contemporary homes. Living Architecture, a nonprofit founded by writer and philosopher Alain de Botton, has commissioned five houses of "outstanding architectural merit," which will be built on sites around England and offered for vacation rental as early as spring 2010.

"We see it as a portfolio of houses," says Living Architecture director Mark Robinson—"a trust, if you will." The company conducted a lengthy search for suitable building sites and engaged prominent architects, such as Swiss Pritzker Prize winner Peter Zumthor, and rising-star firms, among them NORD in Glasgow, Scotland, and MVRDV of Rotterdam, Netherlands.



The cantilevered Balancing Barn (top), by the Dutch firm MVRDV, and the Shingle House (above), by NORD of Scotland, are among five new contemporary houses that will be available for weekly rentals. If the program succeeds, more will follow.

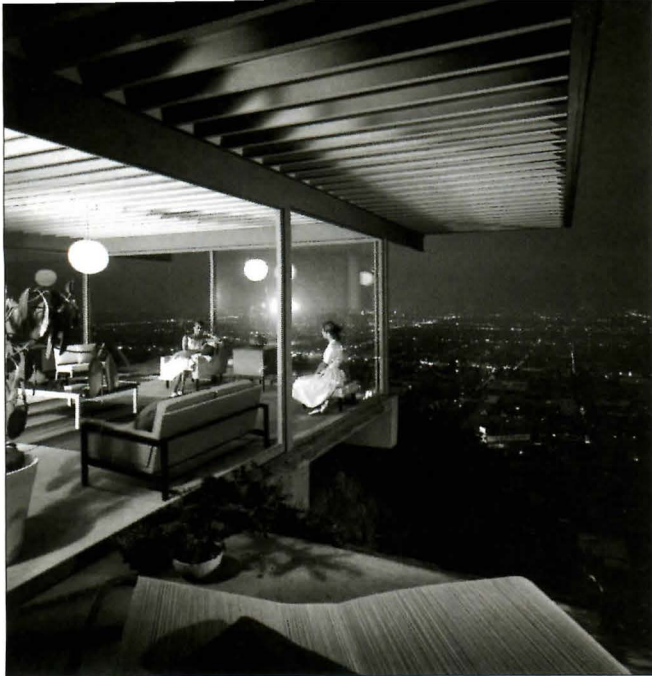


Renderings: MVRDV (above) and NORD (below), courtesy Living Architecture

Because there was no single client, Robinson says, "the brief for the architects was interesting. It asked them to curate, as well as create, a building." But while the project has generated considerable interest in the design community, he adds, "we're not building for some architectural elite. We want the man on the street, who has not stayed in a contemporary house."

Four of the houses are under construction and scheduled for completion in 2010, with the fifth to follow in 2011. Because donors funded land acquisition and construction, "any income will go to maintain the houses and cover operating expenses," Robinson says. If the program proves successful, he adds, Living Architecture plans to expand its collection, "hopefully to add one house a year." For more information, visit [www.living-architecture.co.uk](http://www.living-architecture.co.uk).—bruce d. snider





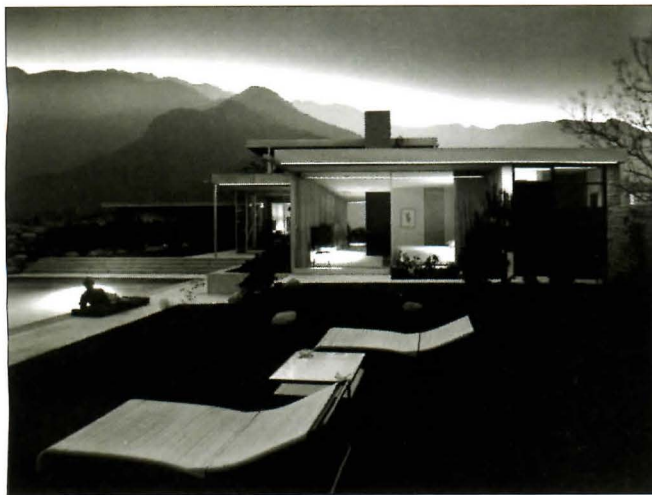
*VISUAL ACOUSTICS* explores Julius Shulman's photo shoots of Pierre Koenig's Case Study House No. 22 (left) and Richard Neutra's Kaufmann House (below left). In another photo from the film, Shulman is seen collaborating with Neutra (below right).

## filming julius shulman

**T**he late Julius Shulman's architectural photos—and his life story, for that matter—possess an indisputably cinematic quality. Now that camera-ready essence is captured in an actual movie, the award-winning documentary *VISUAL ACOUSTICS*.

First-time director Eric Bricker traces the winding path of Shulman's long, impressive career while demonstrating its significant role in the rise and rediscovery of modern architecture. The film, narrated by actor Dustin Hoffman, includes entertaining and informative conversations with such insiders as Frank Gehry, FAIA; actress Kelly Lynch; Ray Kappe, FAIA; Shulman's daughter Judy McKee; Ricardo Legorreta, Hon. FAIA; artist Ed Ruscha; Leo Marmol, FAIA; and Shulman's photography partner in his later years, Juergen Nogai. Images from the photographer's vast archive are interwoven with engaging visits to the sites of his most famous shoots, and Shulman himself appears throughout the film, his irrepressible personality on full display.

Arthouse Films will release the film in October. Visit [www.juliusshulmanfilm.com](http://www.juliusshulmanfilm.com) for updated screening information.—*meghan drueding*



Photos: Courtesy J. Paul Getty Trust



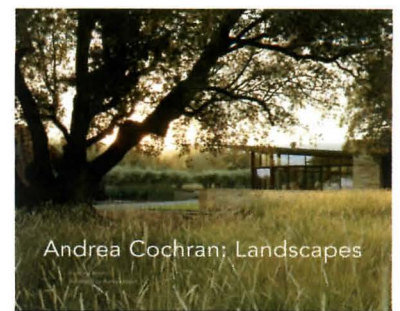
## making a scene

**S**an Francisco-based landscape architect Andrea Cochran, FASLA, has built a reputation for composing poetic and sometimes whimsical landscapes and gardens.


Mary Myers, Ph.D., RLA, ASLA, chair of Temple University's Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, explores the contrasts, intersections,

rhythms, and harmonies between materials, plants, and space that define Cochran's 25-year career in the recently released, lusciously photographed *Andrea Cochran: Landscapes* (Princeton Architectural Press, \$50). Eleven case studies of Cochran's residential, commercial, and institutional landscape projects are supplemented by an admiring foreword from

the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's Henry Urbach, who says Cochran's work is infused with "the knowledge that landscape ... is artifice, the practice of illusion." Delving into Cochran's invariably serene creations, Myers uncovers an ordered, yet imaginative mind and a deliberate, intuitive process. A visual stroll through delightful vistas.—*stephani l. miller*

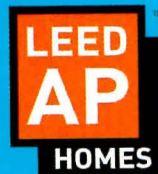




A hand is shown in the top right corner, placing a white business card into a large, circular arrangement of various other business cards. The cards are fanned out in a circle against a solid blue background. The cards feature logos and names of various companies, including MDT, Lawrence Group, ESI, Probas, Kieran, tdc, Rieck, Burt, Halcrow, CBRE, Structurepoint, MSA, SSP, and Adaptive Builders.

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# town architect

richard renner circumscribes his carbon reach.

anyone strolling past the new Portland, Maine, office of Richard Renner | Architects can see there's something going on here. The old commercial building wears a revamped, slightly abstract façade. Its new steel awnings sprout thick mops of greenery. A



photovoltaic array stands watch on the roof. But there's even more here than meets the eye. By combining his firm's headquarters with his own home in an existing urban building—and by rehabbing that building as greenly as he knows how—Richard Renner, AIA, LEED AP, is really putting his money where his mouth is.

Green design is Renner's specialty—he penned the first house in the Northeast to earn a LEED Platinum rating—and he views existing buildings as an essential weapon in the battle to save the environment. “We’re not going to build our way

out of this problem,” he says. To bring this brick box up to standard, Renner spray foamed its walls and roof to R-34 and R-55, respectively; installed triple-glazed windows; and specified high-efficiency HVAC systems (including heat recovery ventilation) for both the office and the apartment. A green roof—480 square feet of low-maintenance sedum—reduces the summer heat load and rainwater runoff.

Renner's budget precluded seeking LEED certification for the office space—“It would have been at least \$10 per square foot in soft costs to do it LEED NC,” he says—but it meets the same sustainability standards as the apartment, which earned a LEED Platinum rating. The living quarters, which Renner designed in collaboration with his wife, graphic designer Janet Friskey, employ abundant natural lighting, long sight lines, and a split-level plan to maximize the 1,400 square feet of living space. “It was a bit like doing a boat,” he says of the experience.

The building's envelope and systems perform as expected—first-year costs for heating, cooling, and domestic hot water totaled \$423—but the environmen-



Photos: James R. Salomon

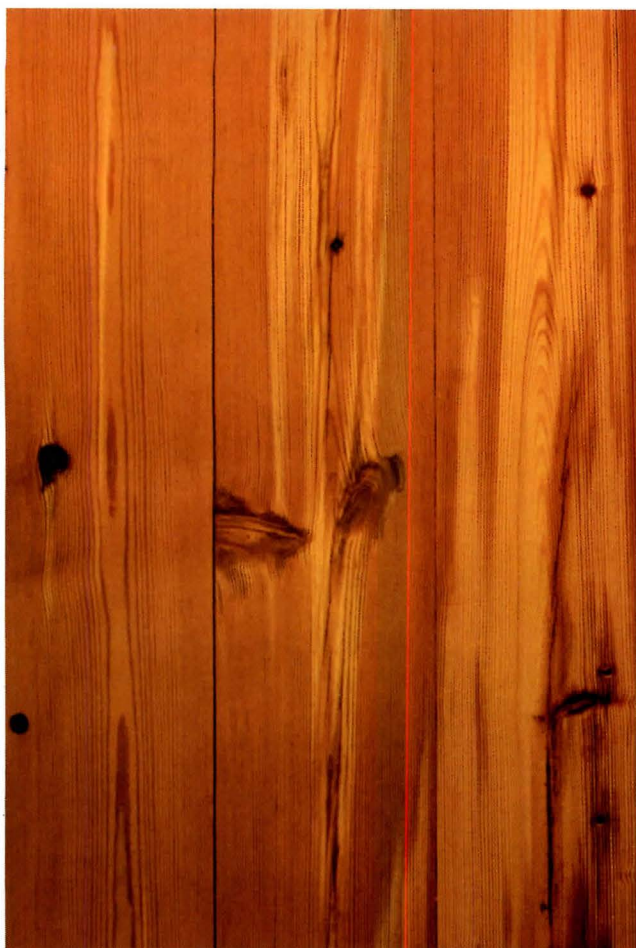
A downtown setting is integral to the green mission of this live/work remodel. The first-floor architecture office (left) makes for an energy-efficient commute—especially for the principal, who lives upstairs (above).

tal benefits of this rehab go further than that, Renner explains. The in-town location saves energy and carbon emissions, reuses both a building and an already disturbed site, and

lends sustainability a little urban cachet. “It shows that you can have a very high level of environmental responsibility and not *compromise the design*,” he says.—*bruce d. snider*



smarter choices for the future.



## old kentucky-honed

Bourbon Boards specializes in salvaged building products from decommissioned commercial structures. The Charlotte, N.C., company's latest acquisition—the circa 1835 Old Crow whiskey distillery in Woodford County, Ky.—is yielding antique brick, hand-cut Kentucky limestone, and old-growth heart pine, which Bourbon Boards is milling into solid and engineered flooring. Trim, molding, stair components, and other custom millwork also are available. Bourbon Boards, 704.376.0575; [www.bourbonboards.com](http://www.bourbonboards.com).

## posts on the wall

National Gypsum Co. has launched a website for building professionals that explains the green components of its products. Highlights of the site include a “Sustainable Features” list identifying each wallboard plant’s source and use of recycled content and an interactive map that allows users to scroll over a plant location



to see if a jobsite is within a 500-mile radius of the plant’s shipping area. National Gypsum Co., 704.365.7300; [www.ngc-green.com](http://www.ngc-green.com).

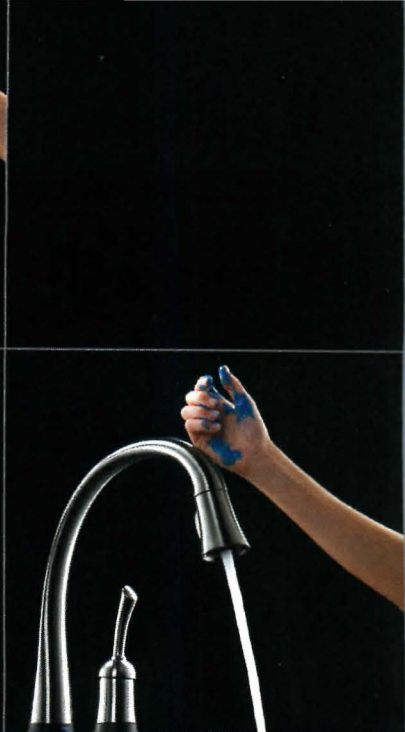


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Roxul ComfortBatt, a stone wool exterior wall insulation made from basalt rock and recycled slag, is now available in the U.S. market. Its Milton, Ontario-based manufacturer says the product offers a thermal resistance of R-23 for 2x6 construction and won’t rot, corrode, or absorb water. Roxul, 800.265.6878; [www.roxul.com](http://www.roxul.com).

—nigel f. maynard





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# k + b studio

## kitchen: short order

**↑** This pint-sized space presented architect Brandon Pace, AIA, LEED AP, with an outsized challenge: design a functional, comfortable, and stylish kitchen in the volume many new houses would devote to a walk-in closet. Pace managed that and more, taming a once-cluttered and awkward layout, establishing a consistent visual theme, and finishing with room to spare. The result is a cooking center that looks clean, works clean, and punches way above its weight.

Working with only 80 square feet of floor space—the legacy of an early 1980s remodel—Pace simplified the floor plan by wrapping an

existing column and utility chase in a thick wall, into which he carved a refrigerator recess and microwave niche from the kitchen side and a narrow coat closet accessible from the adjacent entry hall. A room-width sink-and-range counter fills out the fixed elements of the space.

Responding to the clients' affinity for stainless steel, Pace

tapped a local metal shop to fabricate the laboratory-sleek cabinets and countertops. A folded-metal detail gives each door and drawer front an integral recessed pull. "We don't have any exposed hardware," Pace says. "It's such a small space; we really wanted the detailing to be minimal." Stainless panels line the microwave niche and wrap up the walls to bookend the sink counter. A pot rack bridges the window opening. Exposed cabinet legs give the kitchen an unfitted look. "We didn't want to tie it down, so to speak," he explains.

The centerpiece is a versatile island on wheels. Four feet long in its resting state, the unit can extend leaves from both ends to double its size. That seals off circulation to and from the kitchen, Pace acknowledges, but the effect on the cooks isn't claustrophobic. "It is pretty compact," he says, "but when you're inside that space it's pretty comfortable." When meals are ready, the island withdraws its wings and rolls into the dining area to act as a serving cart.—*bruce d. snider*



Photos: Jeffrey Jacobs Photography

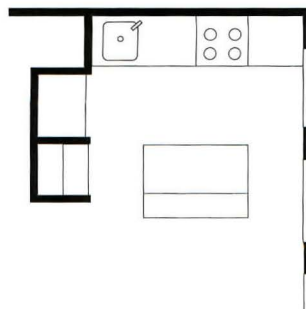
**project:** 609 Kendrick Place, Knoxville, Tenn.

**architect:** Sanders Pace Architecture, Knoxville

**general contractor:** Rob Fuhrig, Knoxville

**cabinetmaker:** Guignard Mechanical Systems, Knoxville

**resources:** dishwasher: Fisher & Paykel Appliances; flooring: Forbo Flooring North America (Marmoleum); kitchen fittings: Hansgrohe; lighting fixtures: Cooper Lighting (Halo); paints/stains/wall finishes: The Sherwin-Williams Co.; range: Viking Range Corp.; refrigerator: Sub-Zero







Custom stainless steel cabinets and white subway tile give this compact kitchen the clean, businesslike air of a restaurant workspace. Precisely controlled geometry—and such touches as a stainless steel backsplash at the microwave niche—make the room fit for full-time display.



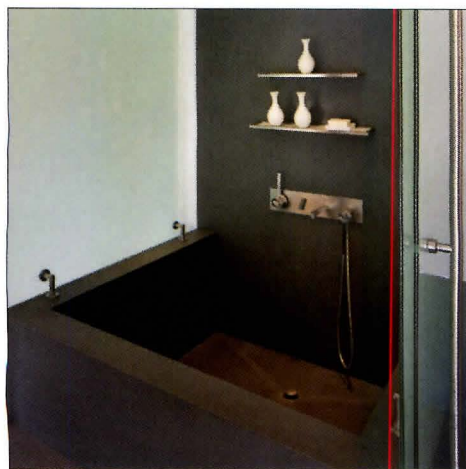
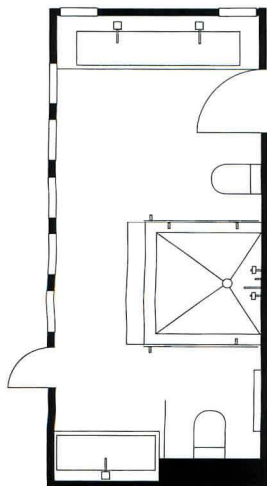
# k + b studio

## bath: the chameleon

The context of its setting—an 18th-century barn renovated as a residence—makes this modern master bath look more modern still. Its floors, wainscot, tub, and room-width lavatory are fabricated of engineered stone, a material architect Joeb Moore, AIA, chose for its ability to make tight miter joints. “You can’t do that with organic stone,” he says. Planes of etched glass and crisply geometrical stainless fittings reinforce the abstracted

simplicity of Moore’s intervention. Existing wood structural members wrapped in ebonized teak heighten the contrast between old and new.

But the most contemporary aspect of this room may be its shape-shifting floor plan, which allows it to function as a master bath, a pool cabana, or both. The glass partitions that flank the tub slide to close off a section of the bath as a separate room with its own small door to the pool deck. Drawing one of the glass panels attaches the tub area to either one function or the other; drawing both closes it off for complete privacy. “Or you can open up both doors, and the whole space serves the master suite,” Moore explains. “It can change in response to the need and the program.”—*b.d.s.*



Engineered stone forms the floor, tub, and wainscot of this master bath, which doubles as a pool cabana. Sliding glass partitions at the tub yield a variety of possible configurations.



Photos: David Sundberg/Esto

**project:** Hobby Barn Master Bathroom, Pound Ridge, N.Y.

**architect:** Joeb + Partners, Architects, Greenwich, Conn.

**general contractor:** Prutting & Co. Custom Builders, New Canaan, Conn.

**resources:** bathroom fittings: WS Bath Collections; countertops, flooring: CaesarStone USA; lighting fixtures: AAMSCO Lighting

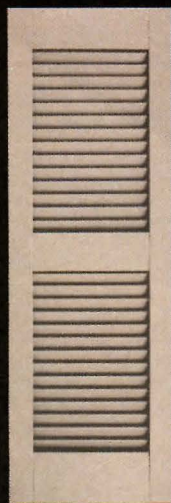


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# reaching out

embracing the collective intelligence of peer networking groups.

by cheryl weber, lead ap

Good professional advice is often elusive. It might come from a trusted mentor, a members-only round table, or an informal group of savvy peers, but you have to make the effort to go out and find it. And in the last frenetic decade, who had the time or energy to be creative about building a career? In those days—now just a fond memory for many architects—keeping up with the demands of clients, staffing, and ever-evolving building and computer technologies consumed every working moment. How quickly things change. With the economy in tatters and equilibrium disrupted, now feels like the right time to revisit issues ranging from the direction and meaning of a practice to how to be more prosperous.

There's certainly a time and a place for inward reflection, yet "aha moments" often happen through osmosis, in the process of exchanging ideas with other smart, experienced people. And while social media is immediate and fun, it does have its limits. There's no substitute, after all, for a



Ilana Kohn

sit-down-around-the-table conversation in real time, one in which you articulate to others your philosophy, your vision and goals, and the problems that worry you at night. Face-to-face networking also opens up the possibility for a chance encounter that sparks a brainstorm or productive working relationship.

The old idea that two

heads are better than one was summed up in the title of James Surowiecki's 2004 best-selling book, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (Random House, \$24.95). Large groups of people are smarter than a few, he argues. They are consistently better at solving problems, at encouraging innovation, and at coming to wise decisions, but not because

"groupthink" is at work. Statistically, a sampling of imperfect answers culled from a group will cancel out extreme errors and point to the truth. But not just any crowd can be trusted. Groups are more likely to be wise when they're composed of people with knowledge of the same subject, yet who are

*continued on page 26*



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## practice

diverse enough to bring different perspectives to the topic at hand. This theory bodes well for the many architects who join business round tables and peer networking groups. We wondered: Where do they plug in, and what exactly have they learned?

### fast-tracking success

Structured round tables of handpicked firms require an intense commitment, but they also tackle executive-level issues, which is why some architects are attracted to them. Four years ago, Heather McKinney, FAIA, LEED AP, joined Rainmakers, a group of about a dozen architects that meets twice a year with consultant Hugh Hochberg, a principal of The Coxé Group, Seattle. "We are much better businesspeople because of my exposure to Hugh and others in the group," says McKinney, who heads up McKinney York Architects in Austin, Texas. "The main point is to learn how to manage firms better, so that we can create better architecture."

The members—in locations stretching from Hawaii and Alaska to Boston—rarely compete for the same jobs, so they willingly share trade secrets. Some members, for instance, are spearheading a task force on converting to Building Information Modeling (BIM)—knowledge they wouldn't necessarily share with a competitor. (For more on BIM, see

pages 13–22 in the May 2008 issue.) They also open their books to the scrutiny of others, comparing themselves against industry standards of efficiency and profitability. "That makes everyone want to be a little competitive, to do better than the industry as a whole as a result of focusing on it," McKinney explains.

A big bonus is the moral

firms like McKinney's rarely employ a human resources specialist, bigger firms do, and can suggest legal experts to turn to for guidance.

Rainmakers is one of four round tables led by Hochberg, who selects the firms carefully from among clients he's worked with for a while. He says he wants to be sure he knows enough

*"we are much better businesspeople because of rainmakers. the point is to learn to manage firms better, so that we can create better architecture."*

—heather mckinney, faia, leed ap

support of having firms of all types and sizes on call for advice between sessions. Although all are grappling with similar challenges, the larger offices have a codified way of dealing with them. So when McKinney had to lay off a few employees early this year, she was coached on how to do it humanely and keep up staff morale. "It was a very distressing experience for me; I hadn't done a layoff for so long that I couldn't remember how to do it well," she says. "It's helpful to share that with other people. When you ask architects in your own city how they're doing, they say fine. They're not going to tell you they're laying off six people tomorrow." Whereas small

about them to determine whether the chemistry is right, whether they'll have something to contribute, and whether the principals have honestly assessed their firm's strengths and weaknesses. The hope is that the group will develop a personal and professional rapport that allows them to be very candid.

Hochberg also looks for firm owners who have a holistic view of their practice. "The common attribute is a sense that success is not only the quality of the work, or financial, or cultural, or technological, but some balance of those things," he says. The size of firms in his groups can range from four to several hundred

*continued on page 28*



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## practice

employees. That makes them different from others that are based on size, such as the AIA Large Firm Roundtable. Those groups, he says, share ideas but don't become intimate, because the members are often direct competitors.

At Rainmakers, the element of diversity is supplied by a collective experience with project types ranging from houses and speculative development

to institutional, public, and international work. And although each meeting has a theme, such as technology or leadership development, sessions always include a discussion about financial metrics, the specific market conditions of each firm, what's going on in the world, and speculation about what's around the bend. Often, an action list is compiled, with people assigned to follow up and

report back to the group. "They're not unlike the topics I consult about, but there's a richer perspective when other firms talk about the same sorts of things," Hochberg says.

### information free-flow

Ideas absorbed through industry networking usually revolve around things architects don't learn  
*continued on page 30*

## foreign relations

think starting a firm is scary? Try doing it in another country. For American architects working abroad and foreign architects working here, the Boston Society of Architects (BSA) is a

guiding light on everything from navigating the immigration bureaucracy to interpreting unfamiliar building codes. Its International Committee supports U.S. architects who design projects overseas—large and small, most with housing attached—with advice on how to enter international competitions and how to network with American support agencies such as the U.S. Department of Commerce, the State Department, and HUD.

Each year, group members are invited to participate in a videoconferenced charrette on a project site in another country. They learn about local building politics and how to adjust for technical and cultural differences. "Our people can get involved if they're interested in developing projects in that part of the world," says committee chair Estelle Jackson, Assoc. AIA, principal of Estelle Jackson Associates in Boston. "It's like a graduate studio in architecture school; we're just pulling it together in a different way."

Its counterpart is the Alien Architects Roundtable, which smooths the way for foreign architects living and working in the United States. When Italian designer Gaia

Grazia Giudicelli, Assoc. AIA, came to the U.S. in 2001, she faced a new measuring system and unfamiliar building codes and licensing requirements. "BSA was a wonderful place to learn all those things," says Giudicelli, who works at Boston-based MDS/Miller Dyer Spears and co-chairs the round table.

Venezuelan Leonardi Aray, Assoc. AIA, who shares the round table leadership with Giudicelli, says the 40-some architects who routinely attend the monthly meetings are coached on overcoming multiple obstacles. "The job interview is a critical first step," says Aray, who works at Stull and Lee in Boston. "We show them how to apply and what should be included in a résumé and cover letter. Some employers have concerns about foreign applicants' training if they didn't go to school in the United States, so they need to be explicit about their qualifications."

Immigration lawyers are frequent guests at the meetings, as are corporate lawyers ready with advice on starting an architecture firm. American employers find counsel here too. "A lot of firms aren't willing to hire foreign architects, because they're not familiar with the process," Aray says. "They believe, and rightly so, that it's complicated and exposes the firm. But we also show them that there is a lot of misinformation." For Boston's architectural community, it's all about creating a robust network—one that only broadens its business opportunities.—c.w.

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in school that are critical to business success. When Clearwater, Fla., architect Cathy Svercl, RA, started her firm, Design Freedom, she found support and the occasional client referral through AIA Tampa Bay's Women in Architecture group. "It's given me an entire world of mentors, different people doing different things at different points in their lives," Svercl says. "We have an 89-year-old architect who is still practicing. You get to see business through the eyes of other owners."

Local AIA and CORA groups are the most widely recognized open networking forums for small- to mid-size firms

*"the common attribute is a sense that success is not only the quality of the work, or financial, or cultural, or technological, but some balance of those things."*

—hugh hochberg

around the country. Most hold monthly seminars, offering a way to connect with other architects, keep a practice current, and rack up continuing education credits. "Last month we talked about how to deal with construction waste in a green way," says Waltham, Mass., architect Bill Whitlock, AIA, who

chairs the Boston Society of Architects' Small Practices Network. "This month the seminar is on paint color. Some subjects aren't exciting, but often those are the ones that hit the sweet spot of need." The meetings provide the critical mass needed to attract experts and product reps who

wouldn't ordinarily visit a small firm. And every December, the group hosts a lively party at a newly designed restaurant, where the architect talks about its design and construction, working backwards to show how decisions were made.

Among these architects, a collegial spirit trumps the instinct to hide private information. "I'm always surprised at how open people are, especially when they are competing with each other," Whitlock says. "There's a guy who designs restaurants and competes with me, but we are rarely going head to head. If we are, may the best guy win. I think people realize that

*continued on page 32*

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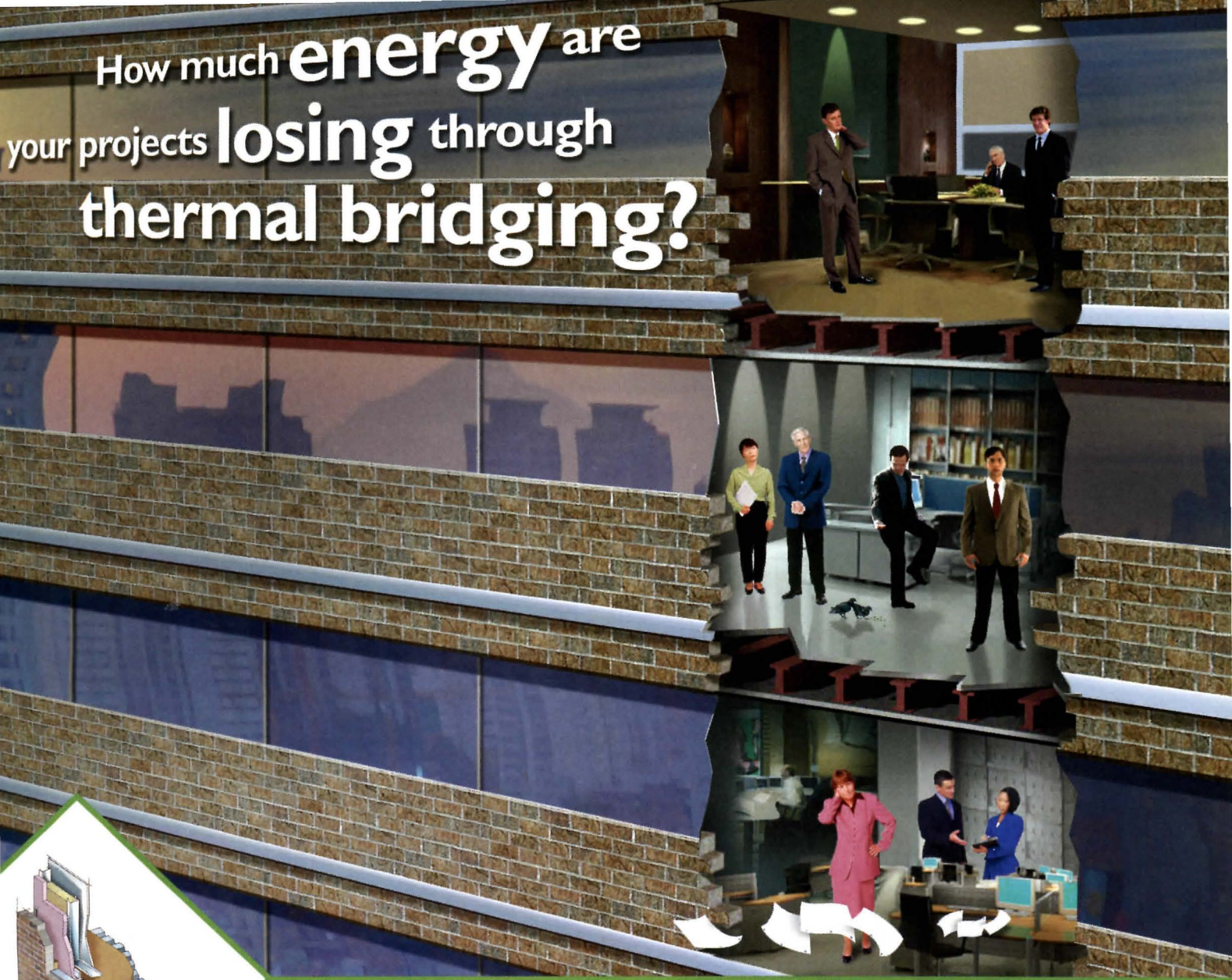
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they get more than they give up.”

Seattle architect John DeForest, AIA, shares that view. “The value of having a peer group far outweighs potentially giving up some competitive weapon you have,” he says. The CORA chapter he started three years ago, now nearly 100 members strong, holds round tables to exchange ideas about a diverse range of topics—from juggling project and staffing demands to the origins of Northwest modernism. More recently he initiated a cross-disciplinary circle of creative leaders—industrial designers, graphic designers, filmmakers—for exposure to more eclectic points

*“the value of having a peer group far outweighs potentially giving up some competitive weapon you have.”*

—john deforest, aia

of view. DeForest, who trained at Harvard, says he missed the “creative pressure cooker” atmosphere of school and uses both groups to maintain professional momentum and perspective.

These “cells” also function as conduits for quick communication. After a client asked for the ultimate sustainable decking, he e-mailed CORA’s electronic mailing list for

ideas. Within hours he had five answers, including one from a city official who focuses on green design. Another anonymous poll asked local firms about their employee compensation packages. “I said that if they’d answer the questions, I’d put the results into a table and send it to whoever participated. People were so relieved to have some perspective that they

were willing to contribute their inside information.” On another occasion, a new bathtub that didn’t fit was speedily salvaged by another architect.

## front and center

As so many architects discover, being a joiner doesn’t just give them a leg up within the profession. It raises their profile in the community and, in some cases, provides a platform for touting new ideas. In Tulsa, Okla., Geoff Kesler, principal of g.kesler | Residential Design, and two other architects are using their newly formed CORA cell to market modern, sustainable design in a

*continued on page 34*



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traditionally minded town. "We're trying to bring Tulsa out of its French Country mentality and to an appreciation of design for the times," Kesler says. "People here think that building a modern, green home is expensive."

In Cincinnati, Mark Streicher, AIA, president of the Abacus Design Group, presides over an active four-year-old CORA chapter of 30-some architects who meet the first Tuesday of every month to swap ideas. A \$10 admission fee buys attendees lunch, plus 30 minutes of networking, an hour-long business meeting, and a one-hour continuing education seminar. To Streicher, this group is a

*"do i get more projects or am i more profitable because of the group? i can't say. but there's no question it's given me more confidence in how i run my business."*

—bruce knutson, aia

treasure trove of information on everything from marketing techniques to how to handle certain clients and what to include in contracts.

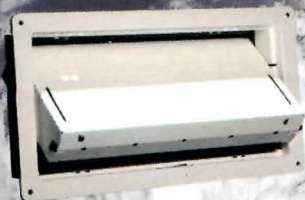
"What's unique to us is that we're affiliated with our local AIA chapter," he says. "It's a backbone for us, and we've been a money-making machine for

the AIA." CORA's robust design awards competition, which drew 50 submittals the first year, gives members a public relations boost too. This year's winners got their 15 minutes of fame when the boards were displayed at the Cincinnati Home and Garden Show and other venues, including

one at a new art gallery. The events were staged as an art opening, with free hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, and a short lecture. For the winners, it was a powerful way to show off their A-list status to potential clients.

A similar scenario plays out in Minneapolis, where the public is regularly reminded of the area's wealth of design talent. AIA Minneapolis' Residential Architecture Committee hosts an annual tour of homes designed by architects and sponsors several design competitions, partnering with such publications as *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine*, *Midwest Home* magazine, and the *Minne-*

*continued on page 36*



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## practice

*apolis Star Tribune*. The group is active politically too. When the city recently changed its residential zoning code, the architects stepped up as advisers. Through planning those

events and the monthly meetings, committee chair Bruce Knutson, AIA, of Golden Valley, Minn.-based Bruce Knutson Architects, says he meets people with whom he wouldn't normally

cross paths. "Do I get more projects or am I more profitable because of the group? I can't say. But there's no question it's given me more confidence in how I run my business."

Intellectual stimulation, connectivity with peers, public recognition: All architects crave these things, and a well-built network is a way to clinch all three. The concept is deceptively simple, and can have a nice ripple effect. "Anytime you're with a group that's diverse, opportunities come up," insists Ed Binkley, AIA, ed binkley design, Oviedo, Fla., a former partner and national design director at BSB Design and a charter CORA member. Plus, he adds, "you get the inside perspective from others in similar fields."

Binkley is at his best when he's straddling the different groups in his orbit, whether it's participating in the Florida Housing Coalition or chairing the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC)'s green home standard committee. As a green home certifier through FGBC, he's often invited to speak about affordable, environmentally friendly housing and says the exposure has led to design commissions.

It was also through FGBC that he hooked up with Brian C. Bishop, who developed a panelized system for building houses. The pair is working on a prototype of Binkley's latest brainchild, the \$24,000, 600-square-foot IKEA.SmartCarHouse. He clearly enjoys architecture's social aspect. "You just never know where that next door is, and what might be on the other side." *ra*



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by bruce d. snider,  
meghan drueding,  
and nigel f. maynard

# outside in

even on dense urban sites, we all crave nature within our grasp.



## internal logic

**t**he only lots left to build on in San Francisco are these impossible lots that nobody can build on," says architect Craig Steely. Well, almost nobody. Presented with a steep, irregularly shaped corner lot in the city's Bernal Heights neighborhood, Steely produced a design that turned its most challenging features to his advantage. Local zoning allowed for zero lot lines at the front and sides of the house but required a substantial setback at the rear. In a bit of architectural jujitsu, Steely declared the lot's long, sloping side—rather than the narrow, downhill side—its front. That semantic twist allowed him to create a multi-level side yard, which functions like a front yard, simply by calling it a backyard.

A folded, galvanized steel-plate stair at the narrow, downhill end of the building leads from the sidewalk to a terrace with a fountain, whose gentle sound helps mask the noise of nearby traffic. "We also used trees and bamboo that make a rustling sound," Steely explains. "It becomes white noise that cuts out the freeway sound." The ceramic-tiled terrace tunnels through the building, serving as sheltered outdoor space flanked by an office and independent in-law apartment. Another flight of outdoor stairs reaches a second terrace at the main living level



A fresh approach to a difficult site yielded a house that communicates with its private landscape, the immediate street scene, and the city beyond. Cutouts weave outdoor spaces into the volume of the building. A multi-level entry sequence culminates in a steel-grate bridge to the front door (opposite).



**project:** Mullen Street House  
**architect:** Steely Architecture, San Francisco  
**general contractor:** Structura General Contractors, San Francisco  
**landscape architect:** Bernard Trainor + Associates, Pacific Grove, Calif.  
**project size:** 3,050 square feet  
**site size:** 0.07 acre  
**construction cost:** \$426 per square foot  
**photography:** Sharon Risedorph







The landscaped side yard climbs in a series of terraces that relate to interior floor elevations. Exterior materials that wrap into the building reinforce the inside-outside connection.

(for those carrying groceries, an elevator provides a shortcut from the garage). Here the structure wraps around a small internal courtyard, which is open to the street view and the sky and serves as an open-air link between the galley kitchen and the living and dining areas. "The courtyard is open most of the time," Steely says, "and the owners circulate through that space."

The building's top-floor master suite, four stories above the sidewalk entry, nestles in the upper branches of an existing mature Monterey pine. "We took that as our maximum height," Steely says, "and just tucked the upper floor into it." The only major space without at-grade access to the yard, the master bedroom enjoys instead a city-spanning vista from its rooftop terrace. But the more private view of the sloping, terraced yard offers its own attractions. In moving into and through the building, Steely points out, "You see the trees from below, and then from alongside, and then from up in the canopy." By broadening the definition of "backyard," Steely created a house in which every major room communicates directly with the outdoors. And, as he says, "That never happens in San Francisco."—*b.d.s.*



## trans-plantation

Craig Steely splits his architecture practice between San Francisco and Hawaii's Big Island. And while the two locales might seem to demand very different approaches, Steely is narrowing that gap. "They really are two separate worlds," he says, "yet I see a bridge between the two in myself and the work I do." His San Francisco-hip modernism plays well against the island's volcanic landscape, and its simplicity minimizes maintenance on weather-beaten oceanfront sites.

Meanwhile, his urban work shows growing signs of tropical fever. Given San Francisco's gentle climate, its traditional housing types are surprisingly inward-looking, but Steely works as hard on his outdoor living spaces as those indoors. "Covered outdoor space, like a lanai, is an idea that translates well to any temperate area," he says. "You get used to having space like that"—and to designing it. "Once you start doing that, it's hard to stop."—*b.d.s.*



The top-floor master bedroom opens onto a rooftop deck. Two floors below, a sheltered outdoor space tunnels through the building, joining its private and public sides (bottom left). Bath cabinets are faced in zebrawood veneer (bottom right).







## garden variety

For Andrew Curtis, LEED AP, and Sophie Robitaille, RLA, ASLA, a Philadelphia renovation was the ultimate test of their relationship. The husband-and-wife team weren't married at the time, and this was their first collaborative project for a client. They had remodeled their own home, working as Robitaille+Curtis Architecture+Landscape, but "having a client is an entirely different thing from doing your own house," Curtis says. The couple also had to balance the project's demands with the pressures of their day jobs: Curtis is a designer with Atkin Olshin Schade Architects, and Robitaille, a landscape architect, is an associate at OLIN.

Not only did their personal partnership survive and prosper, but the remodel proved successful as well. The client had purchased an overgrown, vacant lot perpendicular to her 19th-century townhouse in the city's Fitler Square area. The resulting, oddly shaped site forms an L, with front and rear entrances on two separate streets. She initially wanted just a kitchen renovation, but after discussing the project with Curtis and Robitaille she realized a larger-scale remodel was needed. "The client made it clear from the start that she really wanted the house to open up to the outdoors," Curtis explains.

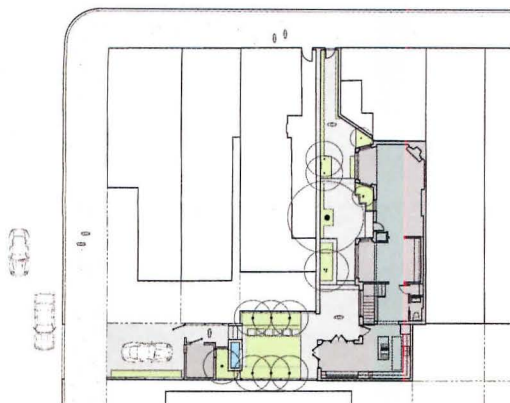
He and Robitaille combined their talents to reconfigure and expand the home. They finished the basement and enlarged the first-floor dining room, linking it to a newly added kitchen,



powder room, and casual dining area in the corner of the site. The addition's bluestone floors continue out to a rear patio the couple created to enhance the relationship between inside and out. From there, a path of the same stone connects to a new garden shed clad in black-stained cedar. "The shed acts as a threshold and a gateway into the private realm of the garden," Robitaille says. A clear-stained cedar fence and carefully placed trees supply additional privacy from the neighboring buildings, making the rear yard equally suited for solitary gardening or larger-scale entertaining.

At the front of the site, a 1960s renovation had set up a layered entry sequence that Curtis, Robitaille, and the client admired. They kept the basic idea—a gated walkway leading to a pair of Charleston-style side gardens and the home's front door—and enhanced it with new plantings and hardscaping.

By paying as much attention to the exterior experience as the interior one, the pair turned an awkward property into a logical, graceful procession of spaces.—*m.d.*



A herringbone-patterned brick entry walk and side courtyards provide a sight line to the one-story kitchen addition at the corner of the lot. The project's hardscaping accommodates outdoor gatherings, while custom planters atop the addition conceal a private roof deck.



## after hours

Although it added extra hours to their workday, designer Andrew Curtis and landscape architect Sophie Robitaille agree that doing the Fitler Square renovation helped them tremendously. "It was a learning experience from all perspectives," Robitaille says. She and Curtis, who met in graduate school at the University of Oregon, welcomed the chance to integrate their individual skills. "We definitely design together," she explains. "It's not like I'm doing the gardening and he does the building."

Luckily, their employers—OLIN (Robitaille) and Atkin Olshin Schade Architects (Curtis)—were supportive. In fact, the client initially contacted the couple at the suggestion of Tony Atkin, FAIA, a founding principal at Atkin Olshin Schade. Curtis and Robitaille are currently working on high-profile institutional projects with their firms. They've also taken on other independent work, such as remodeling the home next door to their own. They did find time toward the end of the Fitler Square project to get married, and have since collaborated on an especially lovely creation: baby daughter Chloé. —*m.d.*



Among the home's 2,000-plus square feet of outdoor rooms, Robitaille+Curtis found a place for a small, lush lawn, nestling it in between the brick addition and the stained cedar garden shed.



**project:** Fitler Square Residence, Philadelphia

**designer/landscape architect:**

Robitaille+Curtis Architecture+Landscape, Philadelphia

**general contractor:** Patterson & Perkiss, Wyndmoor, Pa.

**structural engineer:** Rivera Structural Design, Philadelphia

**cabinetmaker:** Pappajohn Woodworking, Philadelphia

**landscape contractor:** David Bros. Landscape Services, Worcester, Pa.

**project size:** 2,246 square feet (before), 3,365 square feet (after)

**site size:** 0.07 acre

**construction cost:** Withheld

**photography:** Catherine Tighe



## terra firma

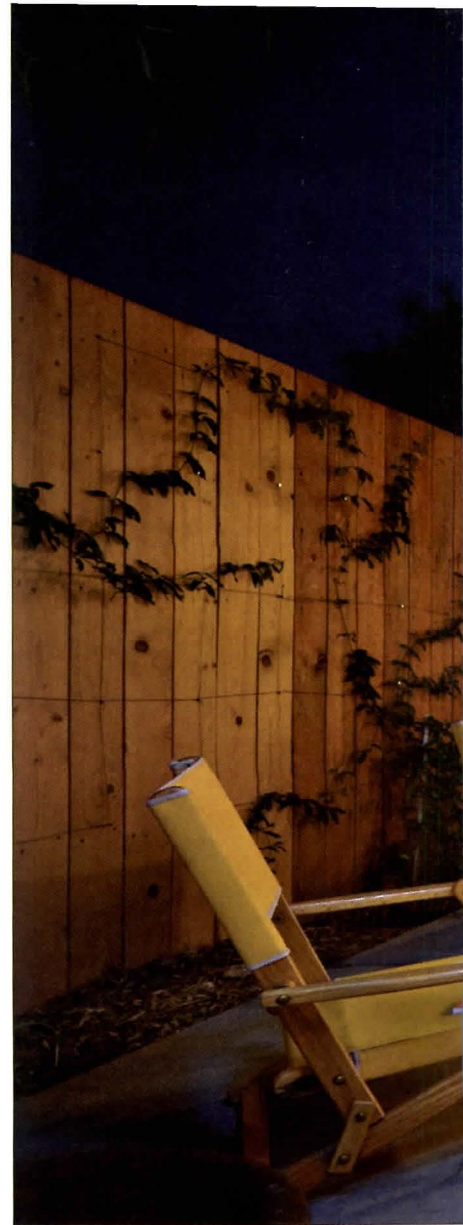
**b**ill Mackey, RA, and his wife, Rachel Yaseen, are true urbanists. The Tucson, Ariz., residents don't own a car, preferring instead to walk or to get around on bicycles or via a golf cart—which, apparently, is street-legal there. It's no shock, then, that when the couple were in the market for a new house a few years ago, they bought an old bungalow in the heart of downtown. "A central location was really important to us," says Mackey, who works as a project manager for Rob Paulus Architect when he isn't moonlighting for his firm, worker inc. "We needed the house to be close to all the services we use."

With a baby on the way, Mackey and Yaseen also needed more from the 808-square-foot, circa 1927 house than it had to give. Among other changes, they wanted to incorporate a strong outdoor component and extend the house in a way that would provide shade from the heat, which can easily hit triple digits in the summer months. But expanding the existing one-bedroom, one-bath structure—whose style Mackey describes as "California Mission Revival"—was tricky. A central challenge, he explains, was the property's "odd-shaped" lot, which "runs along an alleyway and measures 200 feet long by about 32 feet wide."

Mackey left the front of the house intact but unified the main spaces containing the kitchen, living room, and dining room; converted the bedroom into a library; and relocated the bath nearby. He saved the major moves for the rear, where he razed a small studio/garage to make way for extended private areas, including a studio for Yaseen, who teaches yoga. He tucked the addition along the south end of the property and used deep overhangs, "so the building shades the north side of the site," he says.

"The driving goal of the design was to make the interior spaces as small as we could, so we'd have enough outdoor area left over," Mackey explains. Large operable windows and doors bring in light and provide visual access to the courtyard, covered patio, porch, and

Bill Mackey extended the rear of his Tucson, Ariz., house along one side of his property and created a small, but efficient side yard in the process. The new volume offers shade from the afternoon sun, and a large overhang provides cover for the patio and fire pit (opposite). Hearty desert plants and rocks make for dynamic landscaping.

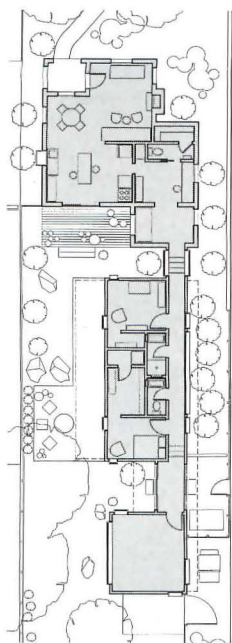






**project:** 825 N. Norton Ave., Tucson, Ariz.  
**architect:** worker inc., Tucson  
**general contractor:** Mega Trend, Tucson  
**project size:** 808 square feet (before),  
 1,683 square feet (after)  
**site size:** 0.17 acre  
**construction cost:** \$114 per square foot  
**photography:** Liam Frederick



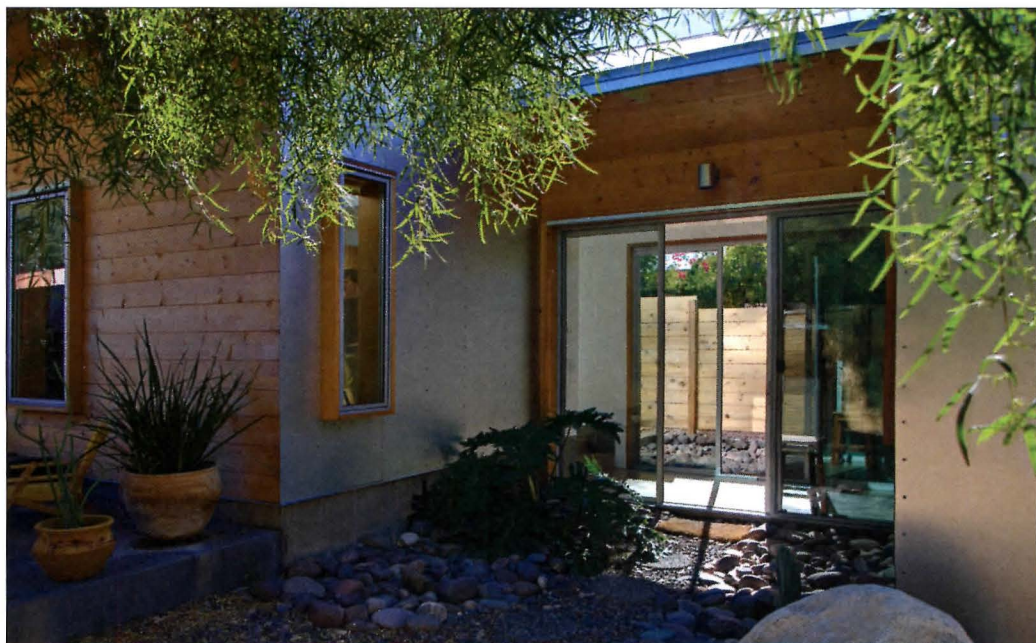


The home features an aluminum and spruce/fir (depending on orientation) rainscreen, as well as solar hot water and recycled cotton insulation. Photo-voltaics will be added in the future.

fire pit. "Every door opens up to a window," he says. Pebbles and smooth stones of varying sizes delineate walkable paths from non-walkable areas, and large boulders serve as seating and climbing objects for the couple's son, Wexler, now 3 years old.

Yaseen, who handled most of the outdoor decisions, softened the site's hard edges with strategically placed potted cacti, bamboo, and flowering plants, such as yucca and orange jubilee. The whole south face comprises plants "that grow up in the summer and provide protection from the sun," Mackey says.

All in all, the spacious, light-filled addition Mackey designed and the climate-specific landscape his wife conceived create a desert oasis that rivals the allure of their downtown pastimes.—*n.f.m.*







Mackey used 8-foot-by-10-foot sliders and large aluminum casement windows to extend the public areas and preserve landscape views. The windows are set deep in a 12-inch Western red cedar box for shading.



## single speed

When Bill Mackey says "My life is crazy," it's no exaggeration. The architect, artist, and illustrator designed the renovation of his home entirely by hand in the spare moments when his son was napping in the old studio/garage out back. If that weren't enough, he's also a co-founder of design co\*op, a Tucson, Ariz.-based collective of local artists, writers, designers, and architects whose main goal is "to educate the public on the idea that the design of the built environment can improve quality of life," Mackey says.

Group members provide architectural services to Tucson's

Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in exchange for studio space, but they also have lectured, done pro bono work, and participated in community outreach programs helping schoolchildren with public art projects. "It's a delicate balance" trying to do all of these things, acknowledges Mackey, whose artwork includes pastels (oil on found wood), collages, and digital overlays on maps.

He'll need that balance even more next year, when he becomes MOCA's Architect-in-Residence. In that role he'll assist with any architecture-related issues that arise. —*n.f.m.*



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# space savvy

a 269-square-foot live/work studio challenges the limits of small.

**m**ichael Fifield, AIA, principal of Fifield

Architecture + Urban Design in Eugene, Ore., believes true sustainable design must address the problem of land consumption. "Higher densities are really needed in the future," he says. "One way of doing that is for people to have smaller living units. You can take a small building and effectively make it feel much larger."

Hanna Yoshimura, an artist who lives primarily in Japan, knew of Fifield's interest in compact design. She owns a house in Eugene, which she rents out year-round, and asked him to design a live/work studio behind it where she could



spend two to three months per year. Fifield obliged with a trim, 269-square-foot structure. Its windows borrow views of neighboring gardens, and its south-facing glass wall opens to a deck that extends the living room outside. The two upstairs lofts' ladders, half walls, and exposed rafters are designed to take up as little physical and visual space as possible. On the main level, a radiant heat concrete floor eliminates the need for bulky radiators. The floor's control joints match a good-luck tatami mat layout, in a subtle nod to the client's Japanese heritage.

Fifield, who is also a professor in the architecture department at the University of Oregon, built parts of the



Photos: © 2008, [www.mikedeaphoto.com](http://www.mikedeaphoto.com)

project himself, working with general contractors Geoff Gold (phase one) and Al Coddington (phase two). He hopes it will spark interest in smaller dwellings. "It was almost like doing a demonstration home," he says.—*meghan drueding*

Sight lines within the studio and from indoors to outdoors help make the space seem bigger. Black marine-grade plywood cladding sets off custom-made Douglas fir doors and windows.





## new material

by nigel f. maynard

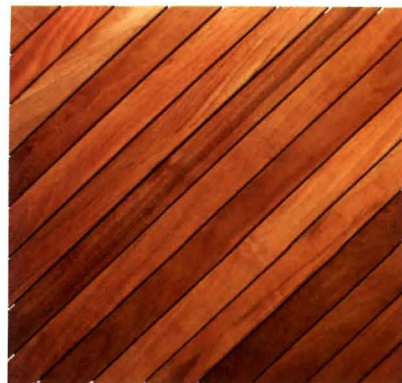


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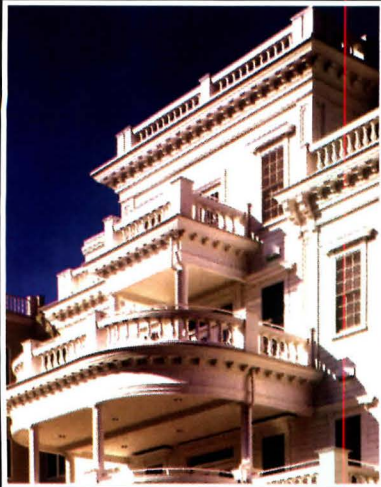
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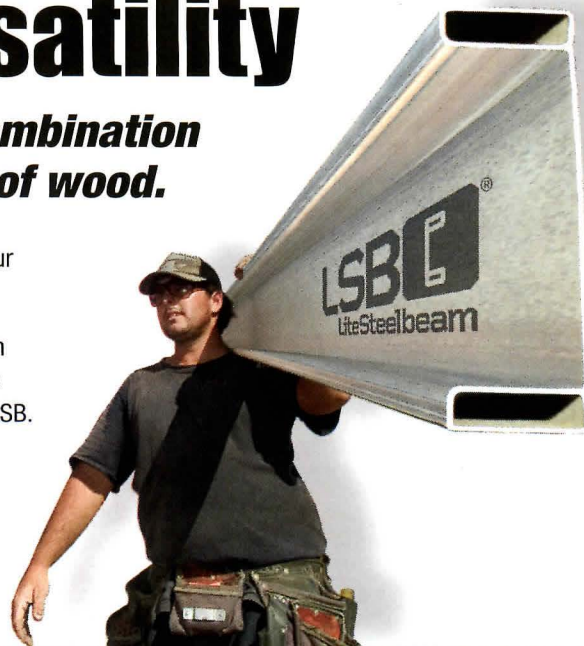
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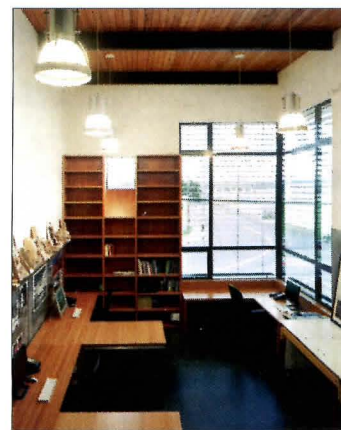
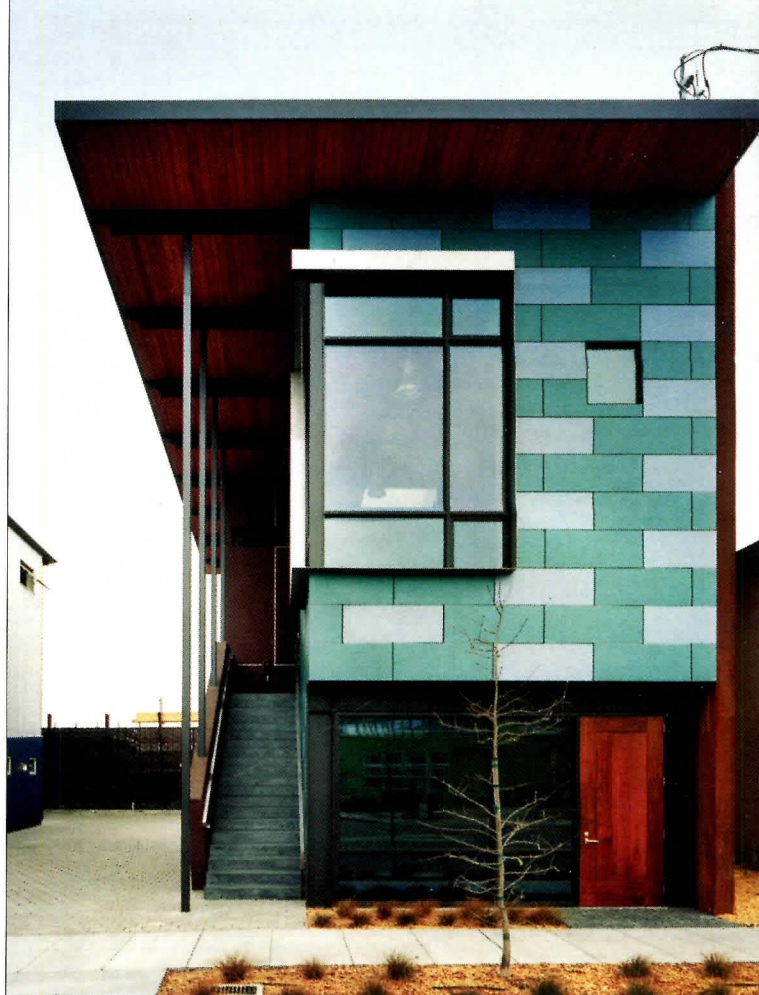
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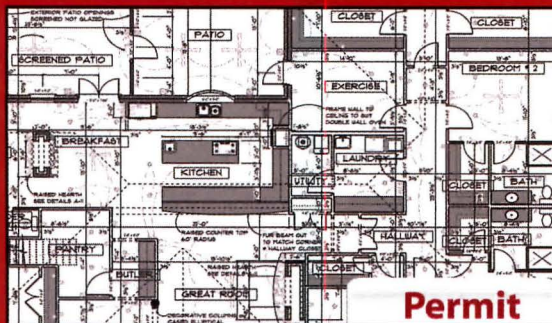
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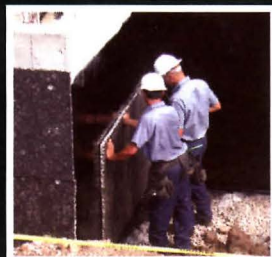




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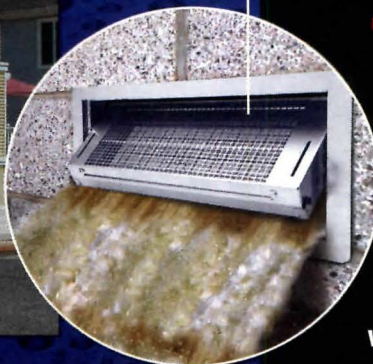
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Our 2009 Leadership Award winners take residential design very seriously, constantly reinventing the ways we execute and deliver houses and housing. Photos: Danny Turner (top and middle), Todd Korol/Aurora Select (bottom). Cover photo: Danny Turner.



**The New, New Reality: Expanding the Architect's Role Through Outreach, Innovation & Collaboration**  
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**residential architect**  
design awards

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Enter your best projects in the 11th annual residential architect Design Awards—page 46



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# starvation diet

why live on chips and salsa, when you can have the whole enchilada?

by s. claire conroy

There are rumblings of movement in the housing market here in Washington, D.C. We're a good barometer for the rest of the country, because we epitomized the boom and fizzle that undermined the financial stability of the nation. Home values nearly tripled between 1998 and 2006, and they've dropped by 25 percent or more here in the aftermath.

As the beast reawakens, we're seeing the greatest flurry among houses priced below \$500,000—ones in good shape and close-in locations. And there's renewed hope for those languishing houses just under the million-dollar mark. If you aren't familiar with real estate in the nation's capital, you should know that \$500,000 is entry-level for desirable neighborhoods near downtown. In the very best of those neighborhoods, a fixer-upper is roughly \$750,000.

What does a cool million buy here? A spacious, partially renovated older house in a good spot or a flawed, one-off spec house on the brink of foreclosure. As perspective, three years ago a million got you a teardown in the hottest

power-broker enclaves.

Despite the current softness in the market here, we will likely never again see a pro forma that makes million-dollar teardowns worthwhile—for a spec builder or a private buyer who covets a new custom home. With very few undeveloped lots left, restricted lending for the foreseeable future, and trimmed portfolios among the cash buyers, we're looking at a future geared largely to remodeling work. This is true of many mature cities.

While perhaps not as glorious as the custom home jobs architects covet, remodeling is a pretty steady gig. Many of you have found refuge in it during the new-home building catalepsy. And many of you will find remodeling a permanent mainstay of your practices. While this seemed feasible in the go-go days of \$500,000-and-up remodels in places like Washington, now you're looking at the headroom between the \$750,000 fixer-upper and the million-dollar partially renovated house. For that \$250,000, your clients will want a new kitchen, family room, master bedroom and bath suite, and all remodeled baths—plus your fee included. Gulp.



Mark Robert Halper

If you're in a market where the numbers are less inflated, please adjust the math. My point is that the pie is shrinking substantially for everyone involved in gussying up our dowdy existing houses. It sounds more and more like a starvation diet for the residential architect, who never had much of a feast even at the height of the boom. Some of you are adjusting to new economic conditions by lowering your fees and trying to make up the loss with an increase in productivity. But that's a paradigm ill-suited to the attentive, creative nature of custom work.

Architect John Brown, RAIC, this year's Rising Star Leadership Award

winner (see page 42), thinks the answer isn't in taking less for the work you do, but in doing more of the work now claimed by others. He's grabbing as many pieces of that remodeling pie as he can—including the fees for design, construction, and interiors and the profit in furniture sales. What's the most lucrative slice he's taken hold of? The Realtor's commission at the start of it all. Although he has several advanced degrees to his credit, he says it's the best credential he ever earned.

It's a new dawn; it's a new day. **ra**

Comments? E-mail S. Claire Conroy at [cconroy@hanleywood.com](mailto:cconroy@hanleywood.com).



# the new, new reality

## Special Events

Housing Tour

The 2009 Leadership Awards

Collaborative Design Charrette

Annual Meeting of the Congress  
of Residential Architecture  
(CORA)

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Join us for the sixth annual **Reinvention Symposium** and find out how architects are already redefining the scope, relevance, and capacity of their practices. In the new economy, flexibility, engagement, and a solid grasp on value are all-important. Architects are uniquely poised to retool, rebuild, and reshape their communities from the ground up. In the next productivity boom, architects won't just serve the same dull masters; they'll blaze a new and better path ahead.

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## AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

### Monday, September 14

Housing Tour

#### Welcome Reception

### Tuesday, September 15

Keynote Address

"Beyond the Building"  
**Andrés Duany, FAIA**, Duany  
Plater-Zyberk & Co. (DPZ)

#### Panel Discussion

Partnering With Allied Professions

#### Leadership Awards Luncheon

- Hall of Fame
- Top Firm
- Rising Star

#### Breakout Sessions

- Architects as Real Estate Agents
- Green, Then and Now
- Citizen Architect
- Big Houses, Little Houses:  
Design Meets Demand

#### Panel Discussion

Using Mass Media to Promote  
Good Design

#### Cocktail Reception

### Wednesday, September 16

#### Panel Discussion

The Big Think

#### Special Charrette

#### Greening the McMansion

Co-produced by *residential architect*  
and *EcoHome* magazines, AIA Seattle,  
the Congress of Residential Archi-  
tecture, and AIA Custom Residential  
Architects Network (AIA-CRAN)

#### Reinvention Symposium Adjourns

#### What Now? A CORA/AIA-CRAN Forum on Re-imagining Practice.

Followed by the Annual Meeting of the  
Congress of Residential Architecture.



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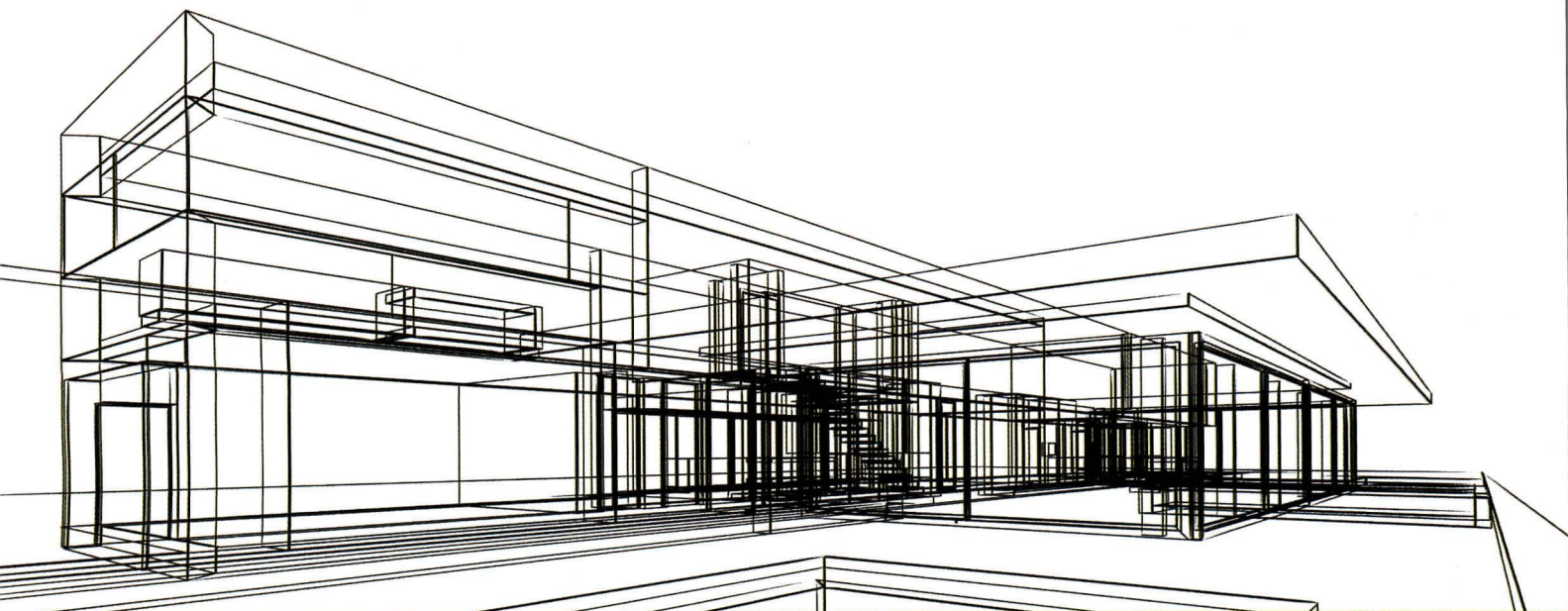


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## OUTREACH, INNOVATION & COLLABORATION

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

#### Keynote Address

##### "Beyond the Building"

**Andrés Duany, FAIA**

What makes neighborhoods truly livable, lovable, and sustainable? DPZ has shown all architects who love houses the road to greater relevance and influence in American housing and American life.

#### Panel Discussions

##### Partnering With Allied Professions to Bring New Ideas to Market

Architects are uniquely poised to form collaborative, project-driven associations with complementary professions.

##### Using Mass Media and Technology to Promote Good Design

Savvy architects are building a market for their talents through the new tools and technologies of mass media.

##### The Big Think: Engaging Community and Government in Design Solutions

In the new economy, even the sole proprietorship must learn to navigate complex collaborative ventures.

#### Special Charrette

##### Greening the McMansion

The deflated housing boom may leave us with a great many white elephants—oversized single-family houses in the middle of nowhere. We'll brainstorm ways to repurpose and transform them for a more viable future.

#### Confirmed Speakers (7/31/09)

**Gary L. Brewer, AIA**, Robert A.M. Stern Architects

**John Brown, RAIC**, housebrand

**Andrés Duany, FAIA**, DPZ

**Jeremiah Eck, FAIA**, Eck MacNeely Architects

**Steve Glenn**, LivingHomes

**Robert Hull, FAIA**, The Miller|Hull Partnership

**Robert Humble, AIA**, Robert Humble Architects

**Michelle Kaufmann, AIA, LEED AP**

**William H. Kreager, FAIA**, Mithun

**Tom Kundig, FAIA**, Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects

**Erik Lerner, AIA**, RealEstateArchitect

**Dr. Steven A. Moore, Ph.D.**, The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture

**Chris Pardo**, Pb Elemental Architecture

**Michael Pyatok, FAIA**, Pyatok Architects

register today [reinventionconf.com](http://reinventionconf.com)



# home front

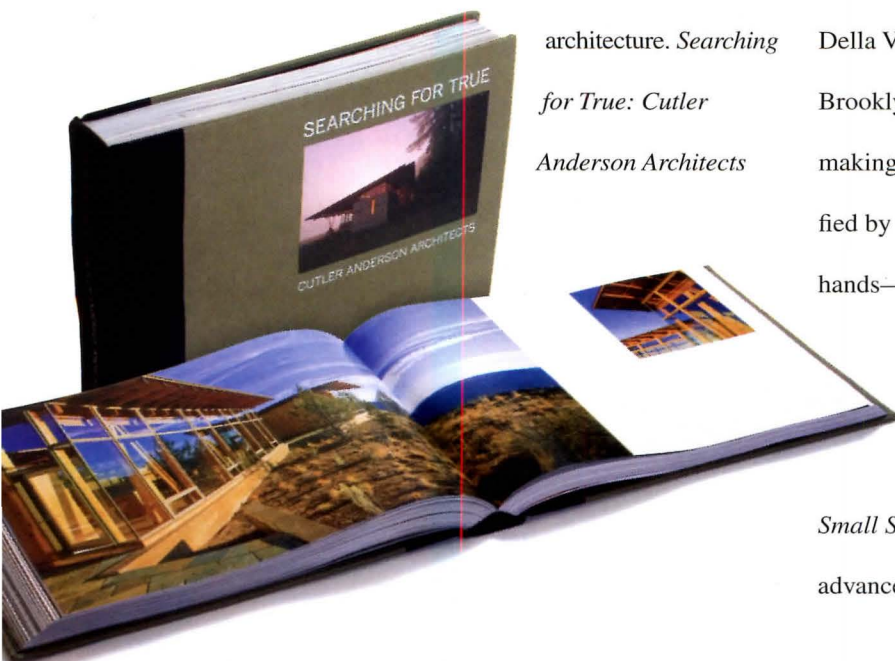
news from the leading edge of residential design.

## write now

With the economy still struggling and many firms a tad slow, the best getaways for the dwindling days of summer may be located among the work and ideas of architectural colleagues—the price of entry stamped clearly on the dust jacket. Here are a few to help fill your downtime through early fall.

Environmental awareness can mean many things, but for James L. Cutler, FAIA, and Bruce E. Anderson, AIA, principals of Cutler Anderson Architects, it's about listening to the materials they use and the sites for which they design—and revealing the true nature of each through their

architecture. *Searching for True: Cutler Anderson Architects*



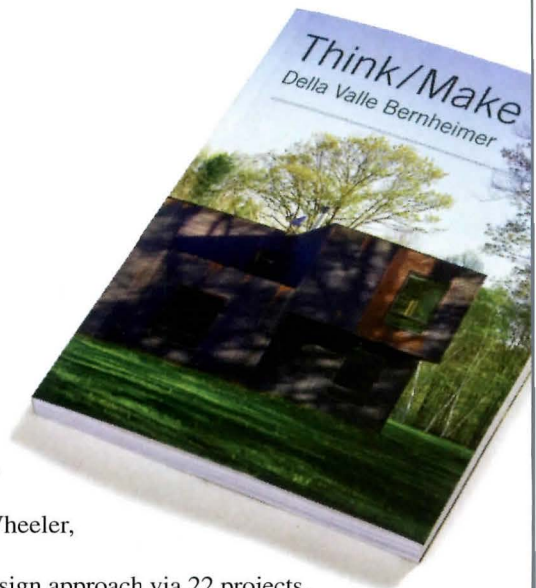
(Rizzoli New York, \$85, September 2009),

by Cutler and Beth Wheeler,

explores the firm's design approach via 22 projects, including 16 houses. Organized by site context (forest, field, suburb) rather than building type, the book reveals through photos, drawings, and essays the inherent truths the Bainbridge Island, Wash.-based firm has discovered within each locale.

For a different, yet equally engaged, approach, pick up *Think/Make: Della Valle Bernheimer* (Princeton Architectural Press, \$40) by Andrew Bernheimer, AIA, NCARB, and Jared Della Valle, AIA, LEED AP, of Della Valle Bernheimer in Brooklyn, N.Y. A continual “feedback loop” of thinking and making fuels the partners' architectural process, as exemplified by the 12 projects shown. For them, thinking with their hands—as well as their minds—leads to better buildings.

Those who thrive on extremes may relate to the experimental architects and designers highlighted in Phyllis Richardson's *XS FUTURE: New Ideas, Small Structures* (Universe, \$29.95, September). Each advances beyond accepted building practices, testing new





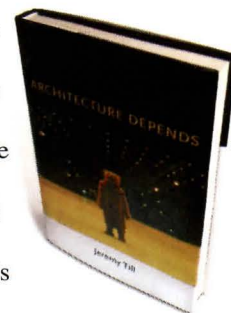
materials and using existing ones in new ways to create structures that explode definitions and perceptions. In essays and photos, the book showcases nearly 50 radical, small-scale projects that straddle the worlds of art and architecture. For more extreme architecture that verges on art, check out *Shigeru Ban: Paper Architecture* (Rizzoli New York, \$65, October). Here Ban delves into his portfolio of innovative paper structures, among them permanent

and temporary houses, exhibition spaces, museums, and disaster-relief projects.

Readers on the hunt for something to challenge preconceived notions and

deeply held ideals may be interested in architect/critic Jeremy Till's *Architecture Depends* (The MIT Press, \$24.95). Till, RIBA, dean of London's University of Westminster School of Architecture and the Built Environment, posits that rather than existing on a plane of perfection above the mess of the everyday world, architecture is shaped by circumstances outside the architect's control, and that architects are in denial about this condition. He proposes a way to bridge the gap, arguing that architects must accept this dependency as an opportunity.

Also available for summer browsing: *Ruin: Photographs of a Vanishing America* (Down East Books, \$65), by Brian Vanden Brink, and *Vernacular Architecture and Regional Design: Cultural Process and Environmental Response*, by Kingston Wm. Heath, Ph.D. (Elsevier Architectural Press, \$80.95).—stephani l. miller



Photos: George Brown

## wright then

To mark the 50th anniversary of the completion of Frank Lloyd Wright's most iconic building, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, several publishers have released new titles on Wright's work. They include:

***Frank Lloyd Wright: From Within Outward***, essays by Richard Cleary, Neil Levine, Mina Marefat, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, Joseph M. Siry, and Margo Stipe (The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and Skira Rizzoli, \$75)

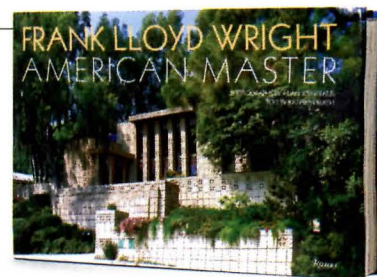
***Frank Lloyd Wright: American Master***,

text by Kathryn Smith, photography by Alan Weintraub (Rizzoli New York, \$30)

***Frank Lloyd Wright: The Heroic Years: 1920–1932***, by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (Rizzoli New York, \$60)

***Frank Lloyd Wright, 1943–1959, The Complete Works***, by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, edited by Peter Gössel (TASCHEN, \$200)

***The Guggenheim: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Making of the Modern Museum***, essays by Hilary Ballon, Luis Carranza, Pat Kirkham, Neil Levine, and more (Guggenheim Museum Publications, \$65)



***Communities of Frank Lloyd Wright: Taliesin and Beyond***, by Myron A. Marty (Northern Illinois University Press, \$45)

***Frank Lloyd Wright Revealed***, by Rebecca King (Compendium Publishing, \$15)



# TILE FROM SPAIN: OUT IN THE OPEN.

These days, outdoor living has taken a quantum leap beyond weekend cookouts and lounging by the pool. It's become bona fide living. What once was just the patio or the backyard has evolved into the "outdoor living room." Traditional outdoor furnishings replaced by high-end furniture, exotic plantings, full kitchens, wet bars, big screen TVs and serious sound systems.

Always the material of choice for kitchen and bath, tile from Spain has made the outward-bound trek — becoming a significant player in dramatic, elegant outdoor living throughout the country. Specifying ceramic tile for outdoor projects makes perfect sense. Consider how well tile weathers the elements. It's inherently durable and tile with little to nearly zero porosity can be specified, resulting in minimal water absorption.

The looks that can be achieved with tile are virtually boundless, giving you the design flexibility to help clients create their own outdoor oasis — an at-home getaway from their hectic lives. If your outdoor design calls for natural or other materials that don't play well with the elements, Tile of Spain branded manufacturers offer tile that mimics wood, stone, metals, textiles and many other surface materials.

Designers and landscape architects today are going all out — inside and out — creating environments that begin indoors by reflecting natural surroundings, and then travel seamlessly to the great outdoors. To stunning sanctuaries that likely include an infinity edge pool and other water features such as fountains, ponds and waterfalls.

Ceramic tile offers unrivaled practicality for the outside world. It's perfect poolside because in wet environments, tile inhibits the growth of mold, mildew, fungus and other organisms. It's also highly resistant to harsh chemicals such as chlorine and bromine. And when it comes to color permanence, bring on the sun. UV rays won't affect ceramic tile at all.

Tile is also a safe bet for outdoor living — especially when it's used around a pool or spa — or any area where slip resistance is key. Tiles are manufactured with a defined and rated anti-slip factor. Aesthetics, practicality and safety. What more could one ask for?

Learn more about how tile from Spain is helping people take on their outdoor world in style. Contact Tile of Spain, 2655 Le Jeune, Suite 1114, Coral Gables, FL 33134. Call 305-446-4387 or email [miami@mcx.es](mailto:miami@mcx.es).





# rhode island scholars

a firm's first foray into leed certification goes swimmingly.

Over the years, Estes/Twombly Architects has designed plenty of environmentally friendly houses. Cross-ventilation, managed stormwater runoff, and natural materials are part of every project that comes out of its Newport, R.I., office. But the architects had never gone through the LEED certification process—until they started designing a Block Island, R.I., home for developer Nick Downes and his family.

Downes and Estes/Twombly are aiming to achieve LEED Gold certification for the project. “The LEED paperwork was quite a bit more work than we initially imagined,” admits principal Peter Twombly, AIA. But the experience has produced multiple benefits for the firm. Now that it has one LEED application under its belt, next time will be easier. And the project spurred a staff member, Joshua Fogg, to become LEED-accredited himself.

Additionally, Twombly was pleased to discover that the LEED requirements permit more design freedom than he had originally expected. “You’re not locked into doing a cubic house,” he explains. “You can do a building with interesting massing and glazing patterns and still meet the LEED criteria.”

The 3,000-square-foot home will perch on a bluff overlooking the ocean. Twombly and his team separated it into three detached pieces to create privacy for the owners’ and guests’ sleeping quarters, which lie on either side of a central, glass-lined living and dining space. By segmenting the plan in this fashion, the architects also encouraged cross-ventilation. Covered breezeways connect the pieces, and a generous pool terrace supplies a scenic outdoor room.

Solar hot water panels will cover the roof of the guest

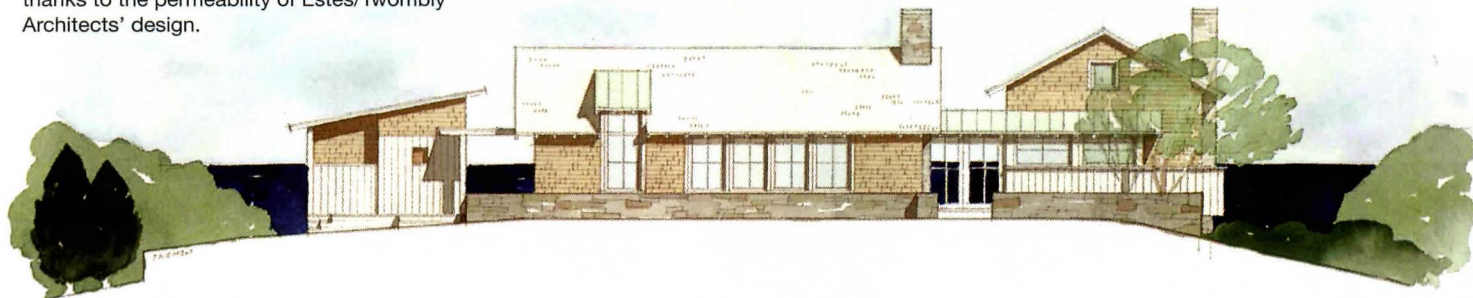


Renderings: studio amd; Drawing: Courtesy Aquidneck Fine Properties

quarters. “We really filled the roof with them so they wouldn’t just be a token gesture,” Twombly points out. The system will warm the pool and domestic hot water, as well as provide supplemental space heating.

An on-site cistern will capture rainwater for irrigation, while foam insulation, a heat recovery ventilator, and an insulated foundation will keep the house toasty during bone-chilling Block Island winters. Construction on the project is slated to begin in spring 2010, with completion anticipated the following spring.—*meghan drueding*

This Rhode Island house for developer Nick Downes of Aquidneck Fine Properties adroitly captures sea breezes and views, thanks to the permeability of Estes/Twombly Architects’ design.





## green pieces

smarter choices for the future.



### hot top

Custom-Bilt Metals' FusionSolar system integrates a thin-film solar laminate with a standing seam metal roof, resulting in a turnkey solution that it says is more affordable than traditional roof-mounted solar installations and will pay for itself in 10 years or less (in most cases). Roof panels come in 9-foot and 18-foot lengths with various kilowatt outputs, including 5, 10, 15, and 120. Custom-Bilt Metals, 800.826.7813; [www.custombiltmetals.com](http://www.custombiltmetals.com).

### green light

Lutron Electronics' Maestro

eco-minder dims homeowners'

lights; its LED alerts them if

they're conserving energy, too,

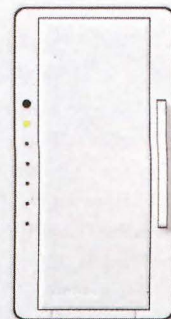
changing from red to green if

energy savings exceed 15 percent.

It's available in white, almond,

and ivory. Lutron Electronics Co.,

888.588.7661; [www.lutron.com](http://www.lutron.com).



### g force

Miele's new G 2002 series dishwashers meet 2011 Energy Star requirements and claim 17 percent greater water efficiency over previous models. The machines use 5.1 gallons of water for a "normal" cycle (down a gallon from other Miele dishwashers); the Economy cycle, by comparison, uses a mere 1.2 gallons of water. It comes in a Clean Touch Steel finish, which resists fingerprints and scratches. Miele, 800.843.7231; [www.mieleusa.com](http://www.mieleusa.com).

—nigel f. maynard



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One of the primary objectives of the broadly supported "Pickens Plan" is to replace U.S. dependency on foreign oil. 95% of propane is produced in North America, the majority, a byproduct from the production of natural gas.

With the Plan's addition of propane as a domestic source for clean, efficient and readily available energy, builders and architects increase their ability to create green, sustainable housing. Adding propane to the Plan—which originally included only wind and natural gas—is testament to its favorable environmental profile and domestic sustainability.

### New Technology Maximizes Propane's Efficiency

New technology is emerging regularly to leverage the environmental and energy efficient benefits of propane. From tankless water heaters to furnaces, fireplaces and radiant floor heating, propane appliances on the market today can provide over 100 points toward the NAHB Green Building Standard.

One such technology is the MicroCHP (micro—i.e. small, Combined Heat and Power) system. A MicroCHP system uses an internal combustion engine fueled by propane to generate heat as well as to power a small internal, electric generator. The heat can be transferred to a central air handler system for space heating or to supply hot water throughout the house. The electricity created by the generator can be used to offset what is supplied by the main utility grid, much like a solar, photovoltaic array is designed to do. The excess electricity that is generated may be sold back to the grid.



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If you'd like to learn more about how to provide the environmental benefits, efficiency, and comfort of propane to homebuyers, visit [buildwithpropane.com](http://buildwithpropane.com).



# k + b studio

## kitchen: perfectly fitting

*f*ew houses survive for nearly 140 years without at least one kitchen transplant. This 1870 Victorian was last remodeled in the 1950s or '60s, says architect Douglas E. Dick, AIA, LEED AP, and was long overdue for another update. While the rest of the house was essentially original, with the high ceilings and elaborate millwork typical of its period, "in the kitchen there was no detail whatsoever," Dick says.

A 7-foot, 6-inch ceiling made matters worse. The house's new owners admired the contemporary unfitted kitchens they had seen in centuries-old European buildings, so Dick responded with a kitchen that, while fixed in place, reads as a contemporary object

Quartersawn red elm cabinets contrast with the room's cooler elements: white walls, glass panels, and stainless steel appliances and hardware. Three pairs of French doors open the kitchen to the house's side deck (bottom).



Photos: Greg Premru

on display in a traditional setting. That setting now shares the proportions and detailing of the original house, including crown molding, molded door and window casings, and a dark oak floor. Yet the crisply modern new kitchen stands out in sharp relief against its Victorian backdrop.

Quartersawn red elm cabinets provide a warm contrast to the stainless steel refrigerator, range, and ventilation hood. Above the sink counter, a bank of cabinets floats against a screen of glass panels that transmit daylight from the adjacent mudroom entry. Aluminum tambour doors flanking the range conceal deep counter-height storage compartments. The owners "really prize a neat, put-away appearance," Dick says, and the convenient storage promotes clutter-free counters.

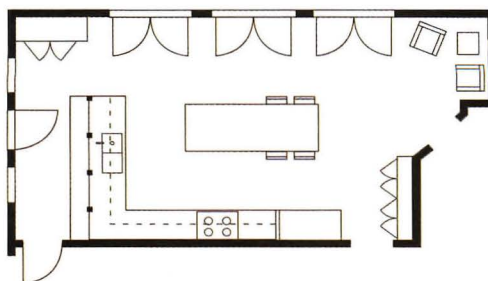
At the center of the room stands an island that spans a drawer base and a pair of stainless steel legs. Its rift-sawn elm top—whose grain presents a swirling variation on the more disciplined theme of the cabinet veneers—serves as both a work surface and a table for casual meals. Like the kitchen as a whole, "It appears as if it could be lifted out and taken away," Dick observes. But not just yet.—*bruce d. snider*







Semi-fitted cabinets allow this new kitchen to float inside a traditional space. An island top of rift-sawn elm contrasts with the quieter grain of the casework. Vertically hinged upper doors align with the drawer layout below. A translucent screen of etched glass panels defines an adjacent entry/mudroom, where an armoirelike coat closet provides a visual link back to the kitchen.



**project:** Cambridge Contemporary, Cambridge, Mass.

**architect:** LDa Architects, Cambridge

**general contractor:** F.H. Perry Builder, Hopkinton, Mass.

**resources:** countertops: Vermont Structural Slate Co.; dishwasher: Miele; doors: Pella Corporation; hardware: Ashley Norton, Blum, Häfele America Co.; kitchen fittings: KWC America; kitchen fixtures: Franke Consumer Products; lighting fixtures: Tech Lighting; range and hood: Wolf Appliance; refrigerator: Sub-Zero



# k + b studio

## bath: open season

Part of a remodeled master suite, this earthy, serene bath occupies what was once the worst spot in the house. “There weren’t a lot of windows,” says designer Tryggvi Thorsteinsson, Assoc. AIA, and those faced a high concrete retaining wall. To open the room to the outdoors, Thorsteinsson and Minarc co-principal Erla Dögg Ingjaldsdóttir, AIA, Assoc. IIDA, repurposed the neglected space between the building and wall as a vest-pocket courtyard with a fountain. A wall-size sash lifts to incorporate the space into the bathing area. “It’s a 10-foot-by-9-foot single-hung window, basically,” Thorsteinsson explains.

Inside, the palette consists of materials that would fare equally well outdoors: concrete, glass, porcelain, and teak. “We tried to use all materials in their natural form, if possible,” says Thorsteinsson, who matched the concrete floor with a concrete stucco finish in the steam shower and defined bathing areas with flush panels of teak decking. The same wood climbs up from the floor to form a backsplash at the tub and a full-width bench in the shower’s glass-roofed corner window bay.

An adjoining space, lined with a vanity cabinet on one wall and a dressing table on the opposite, enjoys a view of Los Angeles’ Westridge Canyon. But the bath chamber, with its private view and spalike seclusion—all carved from leftover space—gives the “better” side of the house a run for its money.—*b.d.s.*

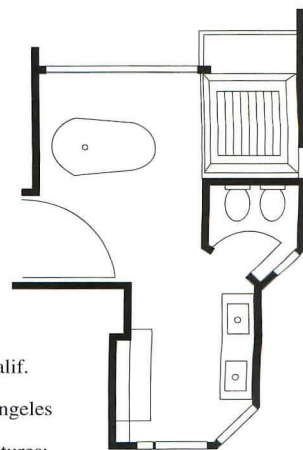


Photos: Art Gray

Inset panels of teak define the room’s bathing areas. Here, the material forms a skirt and backsplash for the freestanding bathtub.



This master bath remodel appropriates an existing concrete retaining wall as the backdrop for a small courtyard, capturing space and light that had gone to waste.



**project:** Tub Living, Los Angeles

**architect:** Minarc, Santa Monica, Calif.

**general contractor:** Owner, Los Angeles

**resources:** bathroom fittings and fixtures:  
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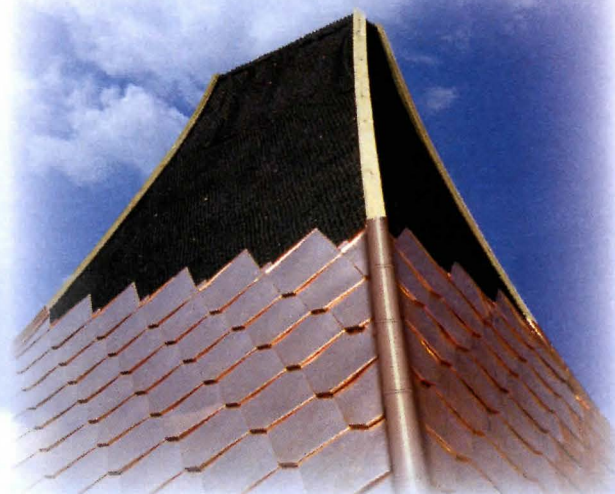
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# paid in full

with their clients caught in the credit vise, architects learn the fine art of bill collection.

by cheryl weber, leed ap

**m**idway through year two of the grimmest recession in decades, many architects are wondering where their next projects are coming from. Across the spectrum of project types—from large public commissions to private homes—the pickings are slim. But those lucky enough to still have clients—and the staff to serve them—are faced with yet another worry: how to collect payment for work completed. Chasing down debt is unpleasant, and it's a task architects are doing more of these days. Until the banking industry regains its footing, the reality is that many clients are dealing with shrunken or frozen credit lines—or worse, bankruptcy.

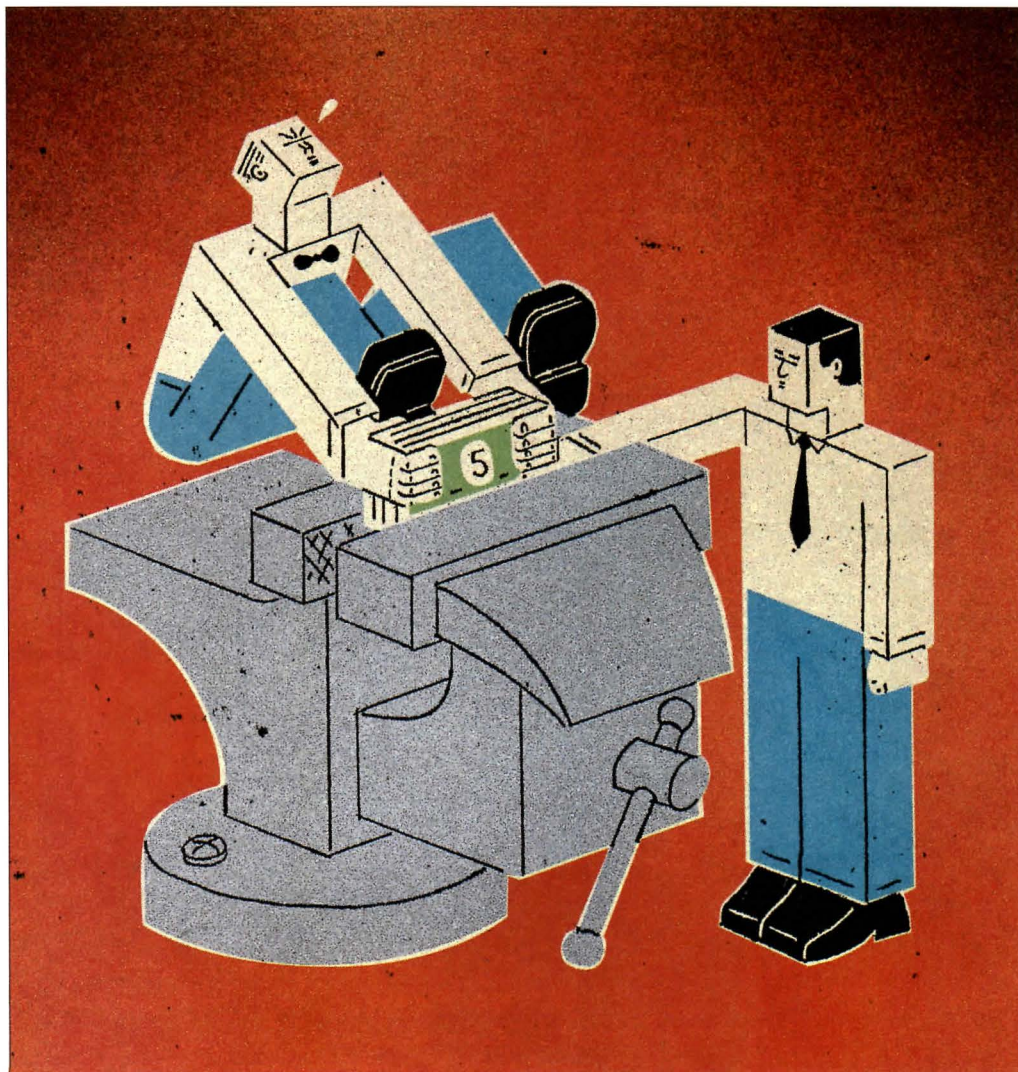
Getting paid requires constant vigilance even in good times. It's accounting 101, the topic on tap at industry conventions and business round tables. But these days, the standard advice—ask for a retainer up front, bill promptly for services rendered, and work only with clients you trust—is no guarantee of solvency. Now, previously reliable patrons are months

behind on their payments. That leaves design firms, particularly those who've maxed out their own credit lines, in financial limbo and straining to cover operating costs. Residential architects are many things to many clients, but banker is a role no one wants.

If it's any consolation, almost no one is immune from the economic fallout. There's the sense that we're all in this together. So, as we wait for the tide to turn, what's an architect to do? Everyone wants the job to go on. Even a token paycheck is better than none.

But with lending at a virtual standstill, what does it mean to be resourceful in your various financial relationships? And when it comes to debt collection, what's the right balance between persistence and patience? This is no time

*continued on page 24*



David Plunkert



## practice

to burn bridges, after all. A fine line must be walked.

### trickle-down economy

At many architecture firms, work was continuing apace

until a year ago, when the mortgage crisis turned the credit markets to ice. A recent phone call to Steven House, AIA, House + House Architects, San Francisco, found him penning a

reminder to a client that an invoice was six months past due. The delinquent client is a developer with whom the firm has a solid 20-year relationship. But after working together on two

successful resorts in Honduras, the third one has stalled. "He began the project right when the economy started turning and has sold only two units this year," House says. "It couldn't have launched at a worse time."

As House tells it, after he sent out the \$30,000 invoice for completed working drawings, months went by. The developer promised to send \$10,000, but more time passed. House got on the phone again and negotiated a payoff of \$5,000 increments. Recently, with the balance down to \$7,500, the client offered to pay \$3,750 and the other half the following week. But no checks have arrived. "I think architects need to realize that the developers, who in many cases are their primary clients, are in the same boat that architects are in," House says, adding that a two-way phone conversation is more effective than a letter. "You don't want to create an adversarial situation, so you're as patient as possible," he explains. While it's frustrating to get paid in small chunks, these are unusual times. The bill will eventually be paid off, House adds, and there will be no hard feelings.

A similar scenario is playing out at GYMO, an architecture and engineering firm in Watertown, N.Y. One bright spot in this town, near the Canadian border, is the demand for new army housing at Fort Drum. "We aren't seeing a  
*continued on page 27*



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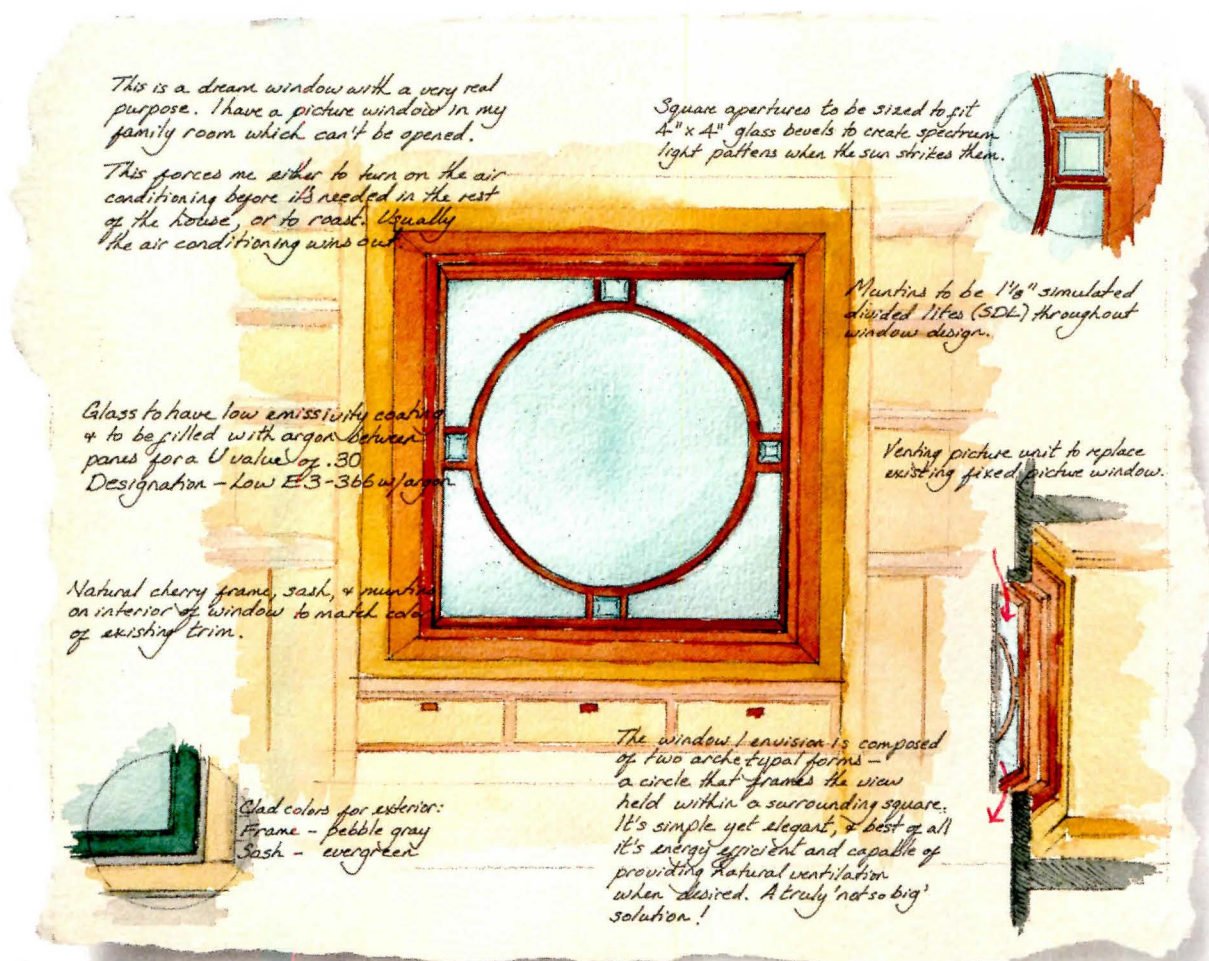


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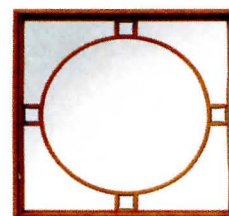
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decrease in billables, but we are seeing an increase in receivables," says principal Stephen W. Yaussi, AIA, LEED AP. That's because most of the work is being done off-base and with private developers, at least three of whom owe the firm money. They say the financing they counted on is not there.

"Some of them we believe will come through in the long run, but others we're worried about," Yaussi continues. "We sent our smaller clients to collection agencies, but you're not going to do that

*"developers are in the same boat that architects are in. you don't want to create an adversarial situation, so you're as patient as possible."*

—steven house, aia

for a big developer who owes you six figures." Until the lending situation thaws, several of his clients are chipping away at their bill.

One defensive strategy is to break up payments into small chunks to reduce the amount left on the table if a

client shuts down the project, suggests Daniel R. Long, RA, NCARB, of Daniel R. Long Architect + Associates in Geneva, N.Y. Another is to drill clients on the importance of speaking up when they're troubled

*continued on page 29*

## laying down the law

It's basic, but it bears repeating these days: The best way to ensure payment is to vet clients carefully. Check references and credit scores, and study a prospect's website for signs of substance and longevity, advises Irvine, Calif.-based attorney Randy Koenig, who represents architects and engineers. A red flag is the architect's cue to either walk away quickly or be extra vigilant by demanding a larger retainer and billing more frequently. Here are Koenig's other fundamentals for collecting what's due.

**Rule No. 1:** State in the contract that you'll suspend work if the client fails to pay in the agreed-upon time frame, and that interest—say, 1.5 percent per month—will accrue on overdue invoices. Putting it in writing sets the tone that your client is on the hook for services rendered. A caveat: "In a one-off relationship, I'd definitely ask for the interest. But things are so tough, I would waive it for good clients," Koenig says. "Then you generate good will by giving up something."

**Rule No. 2:** The contract should also

spell out that clients who don't pay forfeit the right to use the plans. "That's our leverage, and the law," Koenig says. "In addition to the breach of contract, the owner is susceptible to copyright infringement charges. That carries a pretty severe penalty, and owners don't want to be in that position."

**Rule No. 3:** Bill at least every 30 days, maintain a "short fuse" on receivables, and enforce the interest charge, when appropriate. "Don't give the client the opportunity to say, 'I never thought it would cost this much,'" Koenig says.

**Rule No. 4:** To head off the inevitable offensive move, the contract should specify the outstanding amount—\$50,000, \$75,000, \$100,000—that will trigger mediation or arbitration. "If you start writing threatening letters, the firm becomes susceptible to a cross-complaint," he explains. "That's the ultimate leverage a client has."

In short, he says, being proactive is the best defense, and that includes "keeping up a rapport and the expectation that you'll get paid"—let's hope sooner rather than later. —C.W.

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about how things are going. That discussion heads off accusations about the quality of work as an excuse for not paying the bill. "We've had to play chicken with a few clients to obtain payment prior to sending out drawings for permitting," Long says. "It's a hard thing to do, but the good clients don't question it."

Since last fall, collections have been a problem across all project types at Grew Design, an architecture and construction management firm in Woodbury, Conn. Lump-sum payments are almost a rarity these days. A private client who lost his Wall Street job is honoring a stretched-out installment plan for design work on a major house renovation. Two developers are also paying in increments each month, hoping to refinance to free up money. But a third has "just plain bailed. We'll have to pursue collection or suck it up and say, Is it worth the time and effort?" says CEO Milton Gregory Grew, AIA. Either way, it will take each of his three other clients a year to pay back the money they owe. While he waits, Grew has had to borrow money to make payroll.

The banking sector troubles are a nightmare for homeowners-in-waiting too. When IndyMac Bank was seized by federal regulators last spring, one of Grew's clients received a phone call assuring him that his construction loan was intact. The client hasn't seen a dime since.

*"in a one-off relationship, i'd ask for the interest. but things are so tough, i would waive it for good clients. then you generate good will by giving up something."*

—randy koenig

Meanwhile, work on the roughed-in, 12,000-square-foot house is at a virtual standstill. "They're trying to keep one lonely super-intendent puttering there," Grew says, while they figure out other options.

### holding pattern

With one eye on their frayed balance sheets, architects are also scrambling to keep the cash flowing. Last fall and into the dark first quarter of 2009, as consumer confidence plummeted and projects went on hold, many firms were forced to trim staff. While some reductions do help staunch the bleeding financially, layoffs also mean fewer bodies and fewer billable hours from which to pay fixed expenses, such as the mortgage, utilities, and liability insurance.

With receipts down, House is reviewing his firm's fixed costs line by line. "Working with our accountant last year, we made a chart and tracked every penny to determine where to cut costs." He and co-principal Cathi House reduced monthly expenses by 25 percent

by making operational changes, such as delaying equipment and book purchases and switching to less expensive phone and Internet service providers.

Hearing rumors that banks might shut down lending, some architects stored up cash by emptying out their credit line accounts while they still could. "We just took a chunk, figuring it would be enough to help us weather the storm but not so ridiculous that the payments would sink us," Grew says. And at a time when others are lowering their fees to get work, his firm is charging 5 percent more to help cover costs.

Cultivating a relationship with a fiscally healthy lending institution is another survival strategy. When he needed to finance the construction of a small building for his firm last fall, Dan Shipley, FAIA, of Dallas-based Shipley Architects, bet that the local community bank was a safer place to borrow from than a debt-ridden megabank. He's happy he did. "I was hearing about credit markets drying up

*continued on page 31*



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and was concerned that even if my bank could continue to make loans, the terms might not be the same," Shipley says. "But they were, because the bank is prudent and hasn't gotten itself overleveraged. I deal with the bank president; he knows and cares about us."

With snipped credit lines becoming commonplace, architects are resorting to unusual business arrangements that let clients temporarily keep their hard-to-come-by cash. As a sole proprietor, Kenneth Crutcher, RA, Crutcher Studio, Farmington, Mich., is more nimble than larger firms. He's agreed to delay billing on a low-income, market-rate housing project until his client's tax credit financing comes through. "He couldn't provide us with a retainer, but we're going ahead anyway, figuring that funding will be there when the job is done," says Crutcher, who teaches part-time in Lawrence Technological University's College of Architecture and Design. With the Detroit area's economy in the deep freeze, he'd also consider a barter: a portion of his design fee in exchange for an ownership stake in a future development project.

Diversification—a classic plan for maintaining a financial lifeline when the economy sours—may be less effective this time around, but it helps. When investment banks began to crumble last year, Rogers Marvel Architects, New

*"the developer couldn't provide us with a retainer, but we're going ahead anyway, figuring that funding will be there when the job is done."*

—kenneth crutcher, ra

York City, quickly cut 10 percent of its staff to conserve cash. Now that most residential work has stopped or slowed, the partners have a backlog of institutional and government projects. Still, they haven't completely avoided collection woes. A housing developer owes the firm for design work on a 20-acre mixed-use master plan in Jersey City, N.J. "He's not seeing any roll of his property, so he's going to be out there for at least a year," explains principal Jonathan Marvel, AIA. "There's simply no cash flow at his end, so we're being patient."

### affirmative action

As Marvel suggests, architects who maintain positive business relationships in difficult times may find those bonds strengthened when recovery takes hold. It's a principle that Irvine, Calif., attorney Randy Koenig says works for his architect clients. "View client relationships as a partnership you share in good times and tough times," says Koenig, a partner at Koenig Jacobsen,

which has a second office in San Diego.

To minimize exposure, Koenig recommends continuing to work with trustworthy clients who owe you money, if you can, but only on small projects. Another collection tactic: Offer a free service on a new project in exchange for getting paid on an old one. "You're extending more good will with the understanding that you will get paid on the old stuff," Koenig says. "It worked for my client." The advice may seem counterintuitive, but it not only kept both parties busy, it also kept them in contact and created a little psychological leverage. In times like these, he says, "you have to go for the creative solution."

Of course, the surest way to get paid is to choose projects with care. In the overbuilt Phoenix market, two of Circle West Architects' large jobs went on hold this year. But the Scottsdale, Ariz., firm hasn't been left holding the bag. To avoid that fate, principal Peter M. Koliopoulos, AIA, tries

*continued on page 33*

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to keep one eye on local conditions, gauging them against what his team members are being asked to design. "We have a pretty strong awareness of what we can reasonably build and sell condos for, and what apartments can be leased for," he explains. "We [strive to] have a good discussion with clients about time frame, how they'll brand and present it to the public, and how they'll structure their financing." A solid prospect right now is troubled construction projects, at various stages of completion, being snapped up for a fraction of the price they would have brought a year or two ago. "The strategic design thinking from two years ago doesn't necessarily align with what's going on now," Koliopoulos says. "We help developers evaluate the design and suggest something that better meets current conditions."

About those current conditions: The architecture profession is witnessing historic lows in billing activity. But a tiny bit of encouraging news came recently when The American Institute of Architects' Architecture Billings Index—a monthly work-on-the-boards survey—detected a creep up in new project inquiries. The housing market is still anemic, to say the least. Although no one is having an easier time walking out of a bank with a loan, some see an uptick in activity stemming from

*"we have a pretty strong awareness of what we can reasonably build and sell condos for ... and have a good discussion with clients about time frame, how they'll brand and present it to the public, and how they'll structure their financing."*

—peter m. koliopoulos, aia

federal stimulus money and rising consumer confidence. People with cash are seizing the chance to get a project done quickly and inexpensively.

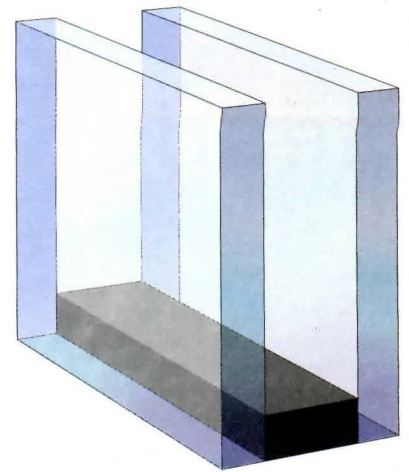
"January and February looked very bleak; we just barely had enough work to get by," says Grew, who is down to four employees from seven a year ago. "But a funny thing happened in the past few months. The phone literally has started ringing. We have a fair amount of work already in place. Fortunately, it's clients with cash who are calling; these are not people who are dependent on lending." One new client is taking advantage of the slow period to design a home, which he'll put off building until later. Another is building a "big guys' room" in which to hang out and store his Porsches, Grew says.

Work has also picked up for Yaussi, thanks to new stimulus money for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-

sponsored housing. "Our first quarter, nothing was coming in the door, but now we've gotten about 35 RFPs from a dozen housing authorities around the state," he says.

In this period of scarcity, competition is up too. Architects must work smarter, and that means making themselves as valuable as possible to clients. For Circle West, that has meant investing heavily in Building Information Modeling (BIM) software in order to integrate sustainable design more thoroughly into its projects and provide clients with energy-modeled options. As a result of using BIM, Koliopoulos says the firm can design a building better and more quickly than it could a year ago.

"We all hope this is going to get better," Koenig adds, "and we say that most of our work comes from our good clients, so we have to keep them happy. But you have to stay in business, too, and that takes creativity." ■



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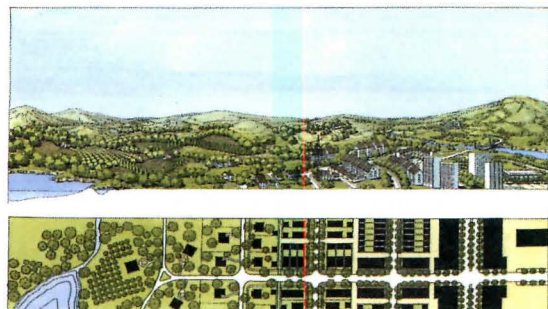
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Danny Turner

Andrés Duany (with Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk) has popularized the concept of an urban planning transect (below) as a way of illustrating the transitions between rural and urban areas within a region.



Renderings: Courtesy Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.

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by meghan drueding

When he talks about the concept of time, Andrés Duany, FAIA, takes on the enthusiastic manner of a star physics student. "Time is a fascinating fourth dimension that is so exciting to me," he says. "The present is irrelevant—it's actually confusing." As a planner, he explains, his role is to think about what a place will be like 10, 20, or even hundreds of years down the line. "Planning is all about the future," he adds. "Time is an ingredient we have that architects don't."

Duany and his wife and partner, Elizabeth (Lizz) Plater-Zyberk, FAIA, LEED AP, have been pondering the future for more than 30 years. Although they trained as architects (and still design buildings occasionally), they realized early on that the best way to affect the long-term built environment was to plan. So the Miami-based duo planned the Florida town of Seaside—still their most famous project—and then hundreds of neighborhoods, towns, and regions, all under the rubric of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. (DPZ). And they and four colleagues co-founded the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), in whose pedestrian-friendly principles all of their planning is based. Through both avenues, the couple have altered the public's perception of what responsible planning and development can achieve. New towns, suburban retrofits, and even revitalized city neighborhoods—the very existence of these contemporary project types owes a massive debt to DPZ.





Photos: Steven Brooke Studios

Picturesque cottages and townhouses line the streets of Seaside, Fla., one of DPZ's earliest projects. Its form-based codes, mix of unit types, and use of vernacular architecture became staples of the firm's work.

## auspicious beginnings

Long before they were New Urbanists, Duany and Plater-Zyberk sought out urbanity. Born to Cuban parents, Duany grew up in Barcelona, Spain, one of the world's great cities. Plater-Zyberk is the daughter of a Polish architect who immigrated in mid-career to Philadelphia's Main Line suburbs, a classic example of transit-oriented development. "We took the train to everything we did—to the dentist, the swim club, the Academy of Music," she recalls. She and Duany met as undergraduates at Princeton University in the early 1970s and moved on to Yale University for architecture school, where they met one of their foremost mentors, the art historian Vincent Scully. After Yale, both briefly worked in major cities—Plater-Zyberk in Philadelphia for Venturi and Rauch (later Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates), and Duany in New York City for Robert A.M. Stern Architects.

They moved to the Miami area in 1975 and subsequently started the modernist firm Arquitectonica with another dynamic young couple, Laurinda Spear, FAIA, ASLA, and

Bernardo Fort-Brescia, FAIA. Duany and Plater-Zyberk settled in Coral Gables, Fla., in a 1927 Cape Dutch-style home where they still live today. Culture shock set in, as they searched for the sense of urban connectedness they'd previously known. "We missed urbanism," Duany recalls. A lecture given by another key mentor, the architect and planner Léon Krier, helped inspire them to leave Arquitectonica and start DPZ in 1980. One of their first planning projects was Seaside, for developer Robert Davis.

Duany and Plater-Zyberk designed the Gulf Coast resort town's master plan to evoke the physical character of places such as Charleston, S.C., and Key West, Fla. Its pedestrian-oriented street patterns, meticulous design codes, and mixed-use downtown were utterly unlike most post-World War II planned communities. "We knew nobody was doing traditional plans but thought we were just doing one place—not [making] a particular kind of statement," Plater-Zyberk says. Yet Seaside's pastel cottages and townhouses—by architects as varied as Deborah Berke, FAIA, LEED AP; Samuel Mockbee; and Aldo





Rossi—captured the public imagination. The project started a national conversation on urban design and laid the groundwork for the New Urbanism movement, which has since become popular with home buyers and developers looking for denser, more walkable alternatives to urban sprawl.

Seaside also catapulted DPZ onto a path that's continued to the present day. The firm soon won commissions to plan high-profile, neo-traditional towns such as Windsor in Vero Beach, Fla., and Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Md. Its success also benefited the architects designing individual buildings for DPZ communities and gave rise to more practitioners of neo-traditional town planning. Duany and Plater-Zyberk's role in forming the CNU in 1993 (along with Peter Calthorpe, AIA; Elizabeth Moule; Stefanos Polyzoides; and Daniel Solomon, FAIA) added to their increasing renown.

## global expansion

As they gathered acclaim and clients, Duany and Plater-Zyberk learned that the best way to work together was to divide up responsibilities. "The key thing is that we work on different projects," says Duany, who is known for his outspoken, charismatic personality. "One or the other of us is in charge of a project. I make the coffee; she makes the toast. Otherwise, if you're two people and you're completely equal, there's no calling off the discussion." These days, the elegant and diplomatic Plater-Zyberk leads only a few DPZ projects per year; her duties as dean of the University of Miami School of Architecture take up much of her time. Duany heads up many projects, as do firm partners Galina Tahchieva, LEED AP; Marina Khoury, LEED AP, of the Gaithersburg satellite office; and Tom Low, AIA, LEED AP, of the Charlotte, N.C., satellite office.

Additionally, DPZ now has three independent affiliates across the globe: DPZ Pacific, DPZ Europe, and DPZ Latin America. This setup lets the 34-person firm act like a bigger operation, amassing a team of architects, planners, and consultants anywhere on short notice. DPZ is known, in fact, for its openness to collaboration and for organizing large, intensive design

charrettes. "We feel a charrette is the most efficient methodology for getting things done in a true-to-the-place way," Tahchieva says.

The firm's international reach has helped it weather the global economic crisis, although like everyone else DPZ is feeling the downturn's effects. "We're saying yes to smaller projects we might have said no to before," says senior project manager Xavier Iglesias. However, an impressive array of work remains in the pipeline. DPZ still designs new towns, but it also lends its energies to regional plans, urban revitalization and infill projects, and suburban retrofits. And the firm is devoting more and more time to writing form-based codes (rather than typical use-based codes) for municipalities all over the world—including its hometown, which in 2004 commissioned it to lead Miami 21, an ambitious overhaul of the city's zoning code.

DPZ also created the SmartCode, a free, modifiable development code first released in 2003 and downloadable online ([www.smartcodecentral.org](http://www.smartcodecentral.org)). SmartCode's availability is part of Duany and Plater-Zyberk's goal of fundamentally altering middle-class lifestyles. "The American middle class is the root cause of the environmental problems of the world," Duany says. "How it consumes land, how it eats, how it transports itself. It affects everything."

## the long view

Over the years DPZ and New Urbanism have attracted not only flocks of followers, but also a fair amount of criticism. Many detractors dislike New Urbanists' frequent use of traditional architecture, and others feel the movement receives undue credit for fighting sprawl. Even opponents of New Urbanism admit that DPZ and like-minded firms have had a significant impact on urban design, though. "The combination of New Urbanism and transit-oriented development, and the return of Jane Jacobs' ideas, generated wider concern about mixed-use development," says Robert A. Beauregard, head of the urban planning program at Columbia University. "Overall, the influence is positive. I'm not a big fan of New Urbanism, but they're forcing people like me to say, What do we have on our side?"



Steve Mouzon



Courtesy Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.

Walkability is a key characteristic of New Urbanism. At Kentlands, a 352-acre, DPZ-planned community in Gaithersburg, Md., brick sidewalks, front stoops, and a mixed-use downtown all cater to pedestrians.



International projects, such as a regional plan for the county of Hertfordshire, England, account for a growing percentage of the firm's workload.



Renderings: Courtesy Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.



Tommy Crow

DPZ's sustainable master plan for Alys Beach, Fla., includes passive solar design, eco-friendly building materials, and drought-tolerant landscaping.

on to start their own companies, oftentimes teaming with DPZ on projects.

Others have absorbed the couple's New Urbanist teachings through programs Plater-Zyberk started at the university, including the interdisciplinary Knight Program in Community Building. Through countless lectures and several books, she and Duany have managed to propel their message beyond the usual boundaries of planning and architecture, into the world at large. "They're both authentic visionaries," says New York City-based Alexander Gorlin, FAIA, who has known them since the mid-1980s. Among their major achievements are Duany's leadership of the Mississippi Renewal Forum after Hurricane Katrina in 2005; Plater-Zyberk's 2008 appointment to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; and their joint 2008 acceptance of the Richard H. Driehaus Prize from the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture.

Stay tuned for more accomplishments from Duany and Plater-Zyberk, who have arranged a gradual transfer of DPZ's majority ownership to Khoury, Low, and Tahchieva over the next six years. As the pair move away from day-to-day operations, they'll spend more time on their nonprofit, the Center for Applied Transect Studies (CATS). CATS has about a dozen projects under way, including freeware codes and standards, books, seminars, and design work, all addressing the complexities of land use that have occupied Duany and Plater-Zyberk for decades. As thoughtfully as they shape a neighborhood or write a code, they've mapped out a logical transition for their careers and their firm. Like all creative pioneers, they're always several steps ahead of the rest of us. **ra**



## milestones

**1977:** Co-founded Arquitectonica

**1980:** Founded Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.

**1982:** Designed master plan for Seaside, Fla.

**1988:** Designed master plan for Kentlands, Gaithersburg, Md.

**1993:** Co-founded Congress for the New Urbanism

**1996:** Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, FAIA, becomes dean of University of Miami School of Architecture

**2001:** Vincent Scully Prize from National Building Museum

**2005:** Andrés Duany, FAIA, leads Mississippi Renewal Forum after Hurricane Katrina

**2008:** Richard H. Driehaus Prize from University of Notre Dame School of Architecture; Plater-Zyberk named to U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

**2009:** Miami 21 (above) approved by Miami Planning Advisory Board but blocked by Miami City Commission; awaiting potential further review





Danny Turner



Art Grice

Design principals Robert Hull, David Miller (seated), and Craig Curtis meld modernism, environmental sensitivity, and regional flavor in the Lake Washington Residence (above) and the Michaels/Sisson Residence (left).

## top firm: the miller|hull partnership

*seattle*

the miller|hull partnership creates regional architecture with national impact.

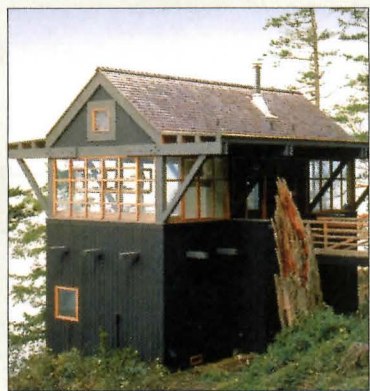
by bruce d. snider

No region of the United States has a stronger, more deeply rooted, or more characteristically regional modernist architecture than the Pacific Northwest. Nowhere is the concern for environmental sustainability more interwoven with the modernist approach. And for a generation, no architecture firm has played as central a role in exploring, advancing, and celebrating this way of creating buildings as The Miller|Hull Partnership. After some three decades of the firm's existence, one cannot discuss regional modernism or sustainable architecture in the Pacific Northwest without reckoning the unique influence it has had—and continues to exert—on both.

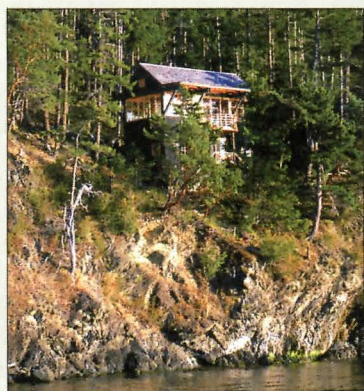
For founding partners David Miller, FAIA, and Robert Hull, FAIA, though, the road to Pacific Northwest regional modernism led very far from the shores of Puget Sound. The two met as architecture students at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash., graduating at the height of the Vietnam War. Given the alternatives available to young men at the time, Hull says, "Both Dave and I chose the Peace Corps."

Miller worked for two years on self-help housing projects in Brazil, building with site-produced blocks of stabilized earth, before returning to the United States and earning a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Illinois. Hull designed schools in Afghanistan, drawing lessons from the ancient building types he encountered there. "One of those lessons," he says, "was passive solar." On sunny winter days, Hull found, "the best place to be was not inside but outside, next to a mud-brick wall." Thus the model for the schools the Peace Corps built: "a string of classrooms and a string of courtyards." Warmed by the sun during the winter, the buildings offered shade in the summer and opened to the northwest, taking advantage of seasonal winds for passive cooling. "These were sustainable ideas that had been around for 2,000 years," Hull says. As he and Miller would find, they were ideas that had applications closer to home.





Photos: Michael Shopenn



Courtesy The Miller|Hull Partnership

Despite its diminutive size, the Novotny Cabin packed enough design punch to draw nationwide attention. Miller|Hull's first multifamily project, 1310 E. Union Lofts (top right), adapts the cabin aesthetic to an urban milieu.

Located in central Washington state, the Campbell Orchard Residence responds to site conditions very different from those of the firm's home turf on the green shores of Puget Sound.



Ernie Duncan



James F. Housel

## milestones

**1980:** Founded firm

**1982:** Mercy Earth Shelter Residence sets course of environmentally responsible design

**1990:** Novotny Cabin earns nationwide recognition; David Miller, FAIA, becomes associate professor at the University of Washington

**1998:** AIA/COTE Top Ten Award, Patagonia Distribution Center

**1999:** Monograph, *Ten Houses* (Rockport Press); AIA National Honor Award, Olympic College

**2000:** AIA National Honor Award, Point Roberts Border Station; AIA/COTE Top Ten Award, Bainbridge Island City Hall

**2001:** First multifamily project: 1310 E. Union Lofts; monograph, *Miller|Hull: Architects of the Pacific Northwest* (Princeton Architectural Press)

**2003:** AIA National Architecture Firm Award; AIA/COTE Top Ten Award, Fisher Pavilion

**2004:** AIA/COTE Top Ten Award, Pierce County Environmental Services Building

**2005:** Norman Strong, FAIA, LEED AP, elected AIA National vice president

**2009:** Monograph, *The Miller|Hull Partnership: Public Works* (Princeton Architectural Press); Miller elected 2010 chair of National COTE Advisory Group



## green shoots

After four years in Afghanistan, Hull returned to the U.S. and found work with Marcel Breuer and Associates in New York City. He also reconnected with Miller, then working for Rhone & Iredale Architects in Vancouver, British Columbia. When an economic recession took the fun out of working in New York, Hull joined Miller in Vancouver, where business remained relatively healthy. By the late 1970s, the two had opened a branch office of Rhone & Iredale in Seattle, where in 1980 they declared independence as The Miller|Hull Partnership.

It was an auspicious place and time for a new firm focused on buildings that worked with the environment. Seattle's population was educated and environmentally aware, and the energy shocks of the 1970s had jolted the country into a new cognizance of where its heat and electricity came from. "The long gas lines ... the cost of fuel shooting up," Hull remembers. "People were desperately looking for alternative building approaches. They wanted to be independent."

Seattle is a long way from Kabul, but its diffuse winter sunlight delivers a useful amount of energy. In both feasibility and client interest, Hull says, "The door was wide open on passive solar." The region's topography lent itself to earth-sheltered construction, and that, he says, "was part of our vocabulary too." Periods of uncertainty often yield opportunities for new ideas to flourish, and Miller|Hull hatched at just such a moment. "We didn't have to do architecture that people had seen before," Hull says. "We were inventing our own architecture."

## locus focus

So were many others, of course—much of it undistinguished, at best. Miller|Hull produced buildings that were more than mere solar collectors, that pursued architectural rigor and delight, as well as thermal performance and environmental virtue. The firm's houses have always been shaped by their sites—often hillsides with views—and by the region's climate, but they also embrace modernist principles and build upon the work of previous generations

of local architects. "Our design approach has always been to deal with structure as part of the aesthetic of the building," Miller says, "and that came out of the early Northwest modernism of Arne Bystrom, FAIA; Paul Hayden Kirk; and others—the Seattle School, as it was called. We were reinventing that approach."

Extending themes already well-established in the region, Miller and Hull inserted their buildings even more subtly into the landscape, gave them a bolder geometry, and made economical and inventive use of off-the-shelf industrial materials. In every Miller|Hull building, large openings—most famously in the form of glazed garage doors—allow freedom of view and access to the outdoors. "That's always been a big part of our expression," Hull says: "the operability of our walls." Deep, overhanging eaves shed winter's rain and provide shade during the dry summer. Uncomplicated forms, local materials, and an insistent bias toward structure over finish recall the region's industrial and maritime structures and the architecture of its indigenous peoples. Elevations often deploy exterior materials in broad, unbroken planes, which, along with the firm's powerfully expressive roofs, give each building a unique and iconic presence.

The firm made its name with a series of tiny weekend retreats and compact houses that married the principals' environmental agenda with their modernist architectural training in a distinctly regional way. "Those struck a chord because they were so small, so efficient," Miller says. Widely published and much awarded, those early projects led to larger residential commissions, which embodied the same cabinlike spirit. "We were fortunate enough to have some university work too," Hull says. "That allowed us to move in two directions, and [the private and public projects] actually stimulated each other." He recalls noticing parallels between a small cabin in the San Juan Islands and a cafeteria for The Boeing Co., which were on the boards simultaneously. "They were both glass envelopes with solid cores," he says. "It got us thinking: whether the program is private or public, inside the buildings, it's still the same people."



Nic Lehoux

A nine-story condominium tower in downtown Chicago, 156 W. Superior brings the firm's structural rationality and environmental focus to its first major residential commission outside the Pacific Northwest. Miller|Hull collaborated with Chicago-based Studio Dwell Architects on the project.



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John Brown's practice, housebrand, focuses primarily on "tailoring" existing homes to the way its clients live, but it also designs its share of new houses, such as the Simpson Residence (above and opposite) in Calgary, Alberta. The firm supplied the home's furnishings, available through the in-house furniture retail store it established in 2002.

## rising star:

**john brown, raic**

*housebrand*

*calgary, alberta*

john brown has reinvented his design firm for the new world and the new economy.

by nigel f. maynard

John Brown, RAIC, is on a profound mission, one that doesn't involve anything as mundane as scaling K2 or swimming the English Channel. The soft-spoken Canadian wants to simultaneously improve the quality of mass-market housing and make better houses more attainable for the middle class. As an architecture professor, he teaches students to become good designers, and, through various professional efforts, he's instructing the public to identify good design, so they can and will make better housing decisions in the future.

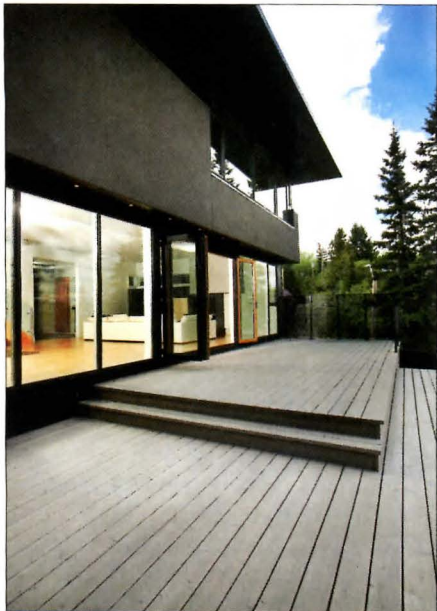
Brown also practices what he teaches. With the help of his wife, Tina van Olm, who oversees business operations, and designer Matthew Worth, he runs a multidisciplinary practice called housebrand. Part real estate agency (Brown is a licensed Realtor), architecture firm, general contractor, interior designer, and furniture store, housebrand claims it's "a new kind of design firm"—one of the first in North America to integrate all these house-related disciplines "into one seamless process."

Although the business model is unconventional, housebrand specializes in approachable, practical modern architecture that seeks to delight its clients. Yes, the firm will design and build a new house from the ground up, but its primary passion is "tailoring" outmoded existing homes to the way people actually live.

### poetic license

Born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, Brown took a circuitous path to architecture, avoiding along the way his physician father's suggestions that he study medicine. "I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I went into engineering, and I absolutely hated it," he says. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Manitoba and no clear path for the future, Brown decided to visit the university's architecture school. The experience so moved him that he applied to The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture. "I realized it was what I was meant to do," he





Photos: Patricio del Rio

Designed in 2007 for a couple with teenage children, the Simpson Residence has a thin U-shaped plan organized around a courtyard to permit the unfettered flow of daylight and views of downtown.



"We started doing basic design exercises, and it seemed to make so much sense because it was a nice mix of the rational and poetic."

Brown graduated with his M.Arch in 1984 and headed off for postgraduate work at Columbia University, lured by the opportunity to study with influential British architect/thinker Kenneth Frampton. "I was there just as his critical regionalism essay was coming out," he recalls. "And it was very important to think about how you can take the ideals of modern architecture and temper them with site, climate, and regional influences. But it became even more important over the course of my career."

After Brown earned his Master of Science degree in building design, he moved to Dallas to find work. Alas, it was inauspicious timing, during the economic recession and S&L crisis of the mid-1980s. Record unemployment and the prodding of his sister led him to apply for a teaching post at the University of Calgary, a job he accepted in 1985 at the age of 28. The academic world has framed his development ever since. Expanding on Frampton's writings, Brown—now the associate dean of Calgary's architecture school—studied architectural theory and worked to reconcile its relationship to practice and the built environment, experimenting with new materials, designing furniture, and doing design/build work.

But ultimately, he wanted to put his theories to the test and did so by launching his first firm, Studio Z, in 1990. Although he earned design awards for several high-end custom homes, Brown didn't find working for wealthy clients fulfilling. "It made me feel good and it made them feel good, but it didn't make much of a difference."

Yearning to have a greater impact in the larger world of market-rate housing, he researched

how the merchant builder industry works and how the masses live and feel about housing. "I looked at the real estate industry, appraisals, and banking, and I tried to get a sense of the whole picture and how I could fit into that."

## the lockbox unlocked

It turns out the real estate license was key, Brown concludes, and perhaps the most

important professional decision he ever made. The power and influence of Realtors cannot be overstated, he says, because when people think they need a new place to live, they don't hire an architect—instead, they get an agent. "I told my father that the three-week course was the most valuable education I had ever had in my life," he says. The real estate license helped build relationships with potential clients, and the commissions from the transactions allowed the firm to defer some architectural fees to later in the project, when clients had financing.

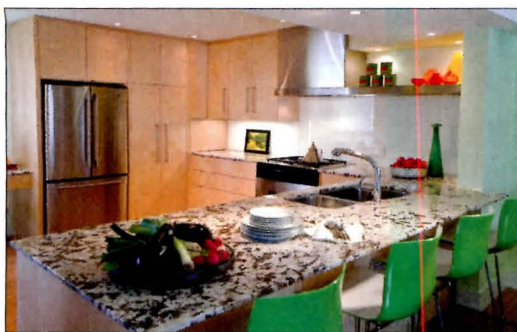
Unlike most firms, which start out doing small jobs and progress to full houses, Studio Z gravitated from new custom homes to smaller remodeling projects, which it found more interesting, more difficult, and more satisfying. For environmental reasons, the firm rejected suburban projects in favor of urban work.

Studio Z refined the business model in 1997 by adding a construction component, allowing the firm to control quality and consistency from start to finish. "It also meant that suddenly we were doing design/build, so we were able to reduce our architectural fees dramatically, which made us more attractive to people who didn't want to hire an architect anyway," Brown says. The partners changed the firm's name in 2000 to reflect its affordable and approachable nature; they came up with the new moniker at a local restaurant, while drinking martinis made with the house gin.

Intrigued by Brown's holistic approach to housing and public education efforts, Jeremiah Eck, FAIA, invited him to speak at the 2008 seminar on the house Eck organizes annually as part of Harvard's Graduate School of Design summer series. "What I was trying to do was examine alternative practices in a down market," says Eck, a partner at Boston-based Eck MacNeely Architects. "I was so inspired by his lecture that I went out and got my real estate license."

Brown is "looking at the profession in a much broader way than most of us who just wait for the phone to ring," Eck continues. "He's a lot more proactive in engaging clients in a bunch of different ways that make it more palatable for them to accept what we do as designers."

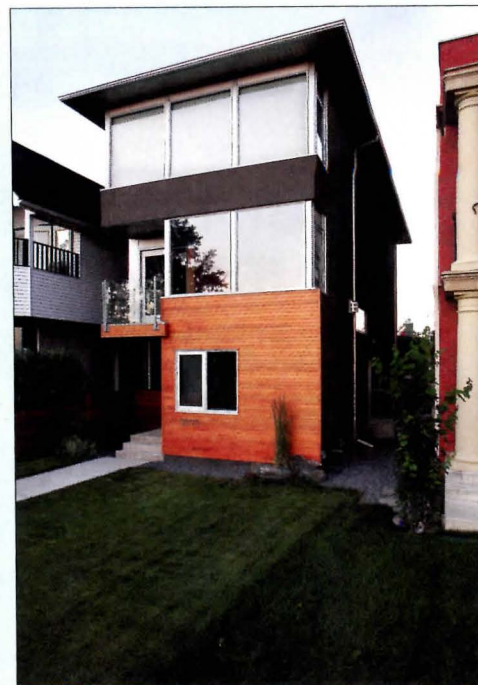
Brown's broad view means housebrand accepts most commissions. It has worked for as little as \$10,000, but "typical" small jobs



Photos (above and top): Bruce Edwards Photography

The Taylor Residence represents the type of retrofit commissions that excite housebrand. The firm helped a retired couple purchase the 1,400-square-foot 1970s townhouse and then oversaw its redesign and construction. And it supplied furnishings for the property.





Photos: Patricio del Rio

The firm designed the 1,700-square-foot, 17-foot-wide Chan Residence for a 25-foot infill lot in Calgary. A second-floor main living space yields dramatic views of the Rocky Mountains.

are \$70,000 to \$150,000, whole-house renovations run from \$250,000 to \$400,000, and new houses (averaging 2,400 square feet) are \$650,000 to \$800,000. The firm sells a process and has no bias toward size or cost. "It doesn't matter to us whether you spend \$80,000 on a condo and we do \$5,000 worth of work or you spend \$200,000 and we do \$100,000," he says. "The process of helping people find something, doing some design work, and doing the construction is the same." It certainly works for the kinds of clients most simpatico to Brown: middle-class individuals, like Michael Husband and his wife, Caroline Niwa, who simply want a great place to live.

"While we sort of skipped the beginner home, we knew that a new-build using an architect would be beyond our means," Husband explains. "Finding a suitable lot or knockdown in the areas we wanted also would have been cost-prohibitive." Instead, housebrand helped the family buy a smallish 1955 bungalow and executed the renovation. "It's quite modern now, which isn't for everyone, but we think it suits the house and our lifestyle," he adds.

## brand anew

The soup-to-nuts process housebrand has set up is thriving, even as the rest of the home building industry struggles. The firm hired three

employees this year (bringing the head count to 15) and has three new houses and 20 renovation projects in the works. Meanwhile, its Slow Home offshoot (<http://theslowhome.com>) has evolved into a full-fledged resource and education portal that's resonating with both architects and consumers. Founded in fall 2006, the nonprofit Web initiative promotes alternatives to builder-driven housing through how-to videos and other features. (For more on Slow Home, see page 16 of the January/February 2008 issue.)

The site's mission isn't to bash suburban developments, Brown says, but to provide "information so people can make informed choices about where they live." In the long run, "people hopefully will make better choices: either they'll hire more architects or designers, or they'll demand better from the residential construction industry."

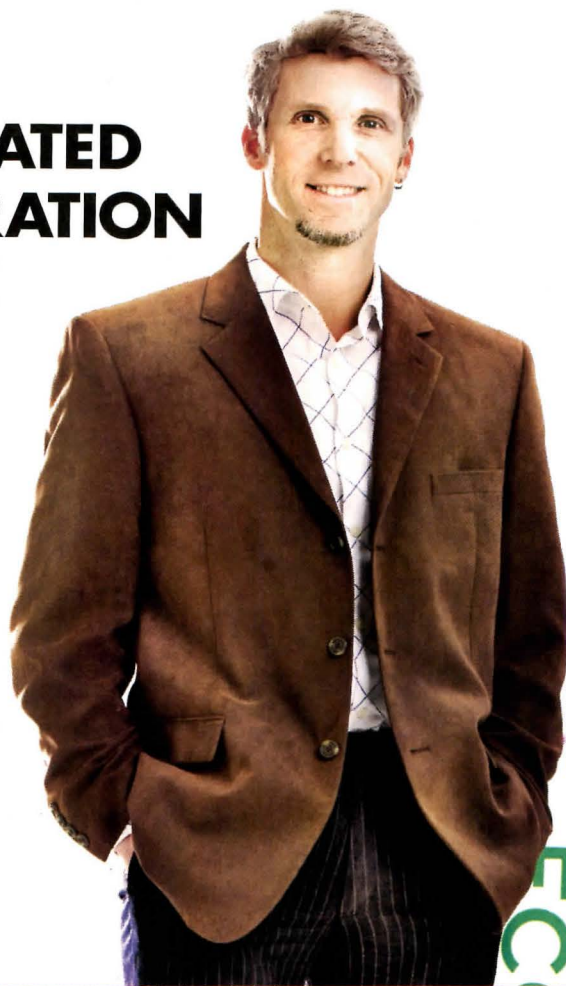
Yes, housebrand's integrated approach works for its partners, but they're under no illusions that it's a surefire solution for every firm. Ever the theorist, Brown says the success of his formula isn't about the specifics, but about turning convention on its head. "The value isn't in saying everybody should have a real estate firm, a construction firm, and a retail store, but you *can* rethink the way you do business and be more innovative in how you get what you do out to the public." **ra**

## milestones

- 1990:** Founded Studio Z
- 1992:** Completed first house
- 1995:** Added real estate services
- 1997:** Added construction services
- 2000:** Changed name to housebrand; launched "tailored home" strategy
- 2001:** Added interior design services
- 2002:** Added furniture retailing; opened housebrand Demonstration Center; Prairie Design Award, Millennium Tower
- 2003:** Added limited-run furniture manufacturing; Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Award of Excellence for Innovation
- 2005:** Added limited-run building component manufacturing
- 2006:** Founded Slow Home Movement; Prairie Design Award, Rothney Astrophysical Observatory
- 2007:** Launched Slow Home website
- 2008:** Opened housebrand Design Store
- 2009:** Started Web-based Slow Home Design School



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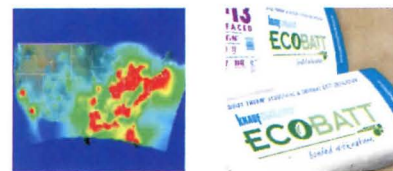
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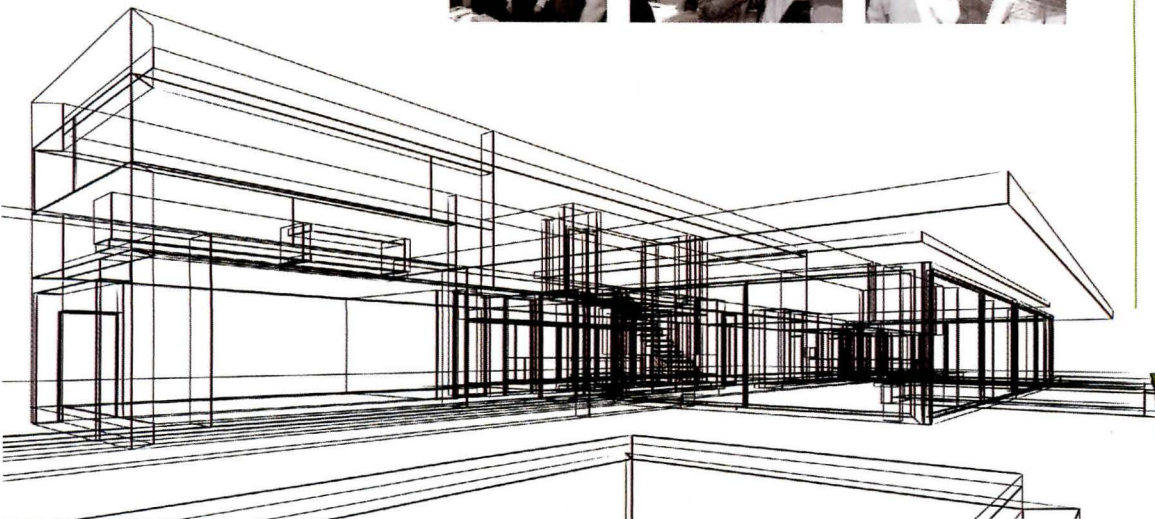
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## Clawson Architects: New Life For A Stately New England Dutch Colonial

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For Clawson Architects of Maplewood, New Jersey, this stately New England Dutch Colonial presented many of the challenges architects often see with renovations. The home sits perched high on a hillside. The sloped yard had been poorly developed, creating an undesirable back yard and an inadequate single-car garage. In addition to a new kitchen and family room, the client requested an attached two-car garage.

The completed design engages the landscape with a traditional barn-like structure attached to the home. The lower level is a two-car garage, the upper level a new recreation room with direct access to the upper yard.

With its position as a natural focal point, the details and material selection for the new two-car garage were very important. The custom mahogany doors from Designer

Doors, the stacked stone walls, cupola and custom millwork details tailored the structure to appear as if the garage addition had always belonged with the original home. The end result reflects the concept of the house in relationship to the landscape and a sense of arrival to the homeowners and friends.

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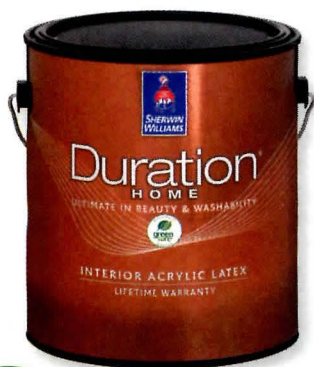
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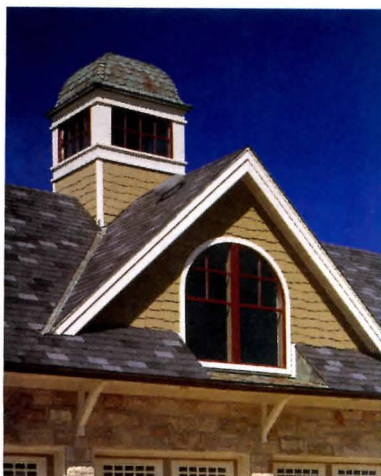
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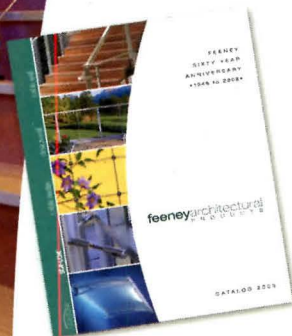
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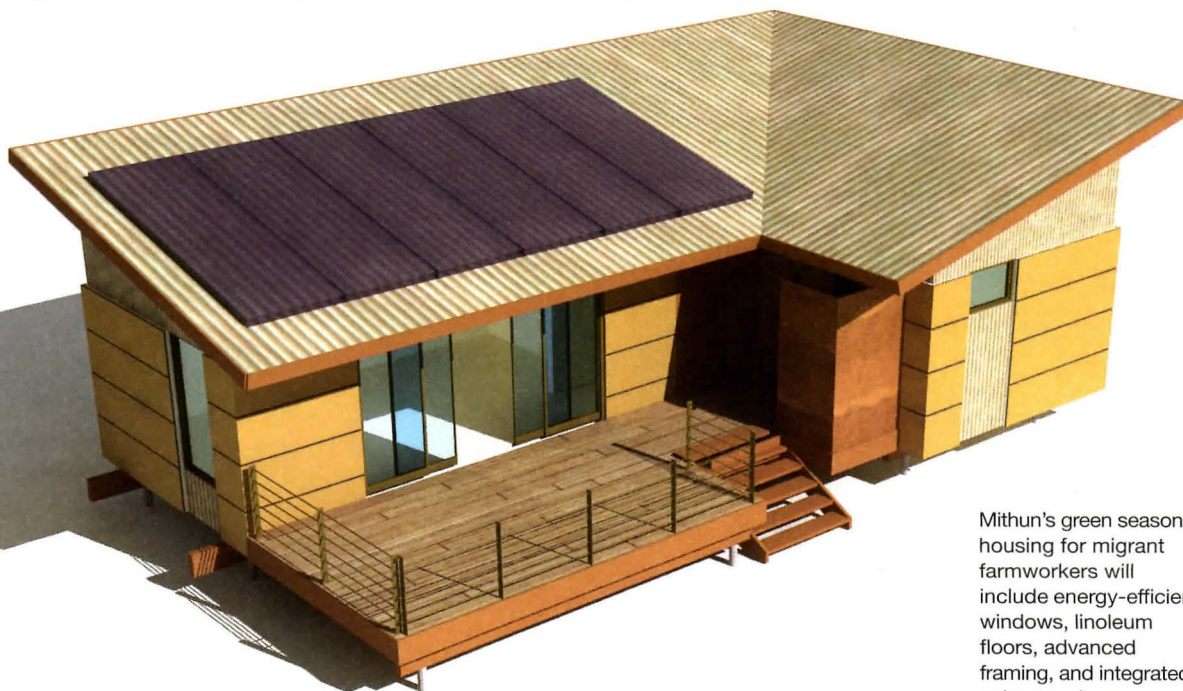
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# downtime on the farm

migrant workers get a clean, eco-friendly place to call home.



Mithun's green seasonal housing for migrant farmworkers will include energy-efficient windows, linoleum floors, advanced framing, and integrated solar panels on some units. Working with a grant from Enterprise Community Partners, the firm hopes to refine the prototype and sell the homes through fabricators to the farm community.



Renderings: Mithun / [www.mithun.com](http://www.mithun.com)

Imagine a cluster of 30 or so diminutive homes set on the edge of a large field, their compact rectangles topped with tilted roofs and punctuated with bright apple-green or ochre siding. This new crop of farmworker housing, designed by the Seattle firm Mithun, will soon grace two farms in Washington's Skagit Valley. But they're not just comfortable, stylish places for seasonal laborers to relax after a hard day in the orchards. Dubbed "light green," "green," and "bright green," the three modular prototypes offer increasing levels of environmentally friendly methods and materials. The bright green

model makes as much energy

as it uses; all three offer flexible indoor and outdoor spaces for four people. The 580-square-foot dwellings both nod to and update the utilitarian self-sufficiency of farm buildings. The project team's top priority was to provide comfort through shading, ventilation, and a semiprivate outdoor space attached to the house. "Most farmworker housing is fairly rudimentary—there's a door to the outside, and you're in common space on grass or dirt," explains principal Richard Franko, AIA, LEED AP. That airiness, and a color palette that pops, makes treasures out of simple boxes. "We want them to project a positive image," he says.—*cheryl weber, leed ap*



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### RECOGNITION

Winners will be featured in the May/June 2010 issue of *residential architect*, online at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com), and honored at the Best in Housing Awards Dinner during the 2010 AIA Convention in Miami.

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### QUESTIONS?

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# the business of making art

is taking your hot product idea to market worth the headaches?

by nigel f. maynard

**b**ruce Tomb had no clear plans in 1984 when he hand-cast a basin for a gallery exhibition in Santa Clara, Calif. As an art piece, *Sacred Basin* was successful, but “it wasn’t done with the intent to become a product,” the San Francisco-based designer says. Perhaps, but it became just that soon thereafter, when Tomb was serving as project designer on the now-closed Clodagh Ross Williams store in New York City.

“I had a couple of castings that I had done in my attempt to make the first sink,” Tomb explains. “They were rather crude, and by most people’s standards they would be considered unacceptable.” But once installed in the store, the basin was a hit, generating numerous requests from customers. Eventually, as orders trickled in, he decided “it made sense to mass produce it.”

The move isn’t unusual; many well-known industrial design pieces began as singular objets d’art fashioned by architects before blossoming into modern design icons produced by major purveyors. Less common is the archi-

tect who assumes control of his product from the design phase all the way through manufacturing. For those who manage to pull it off, the rewards can be creatively fulfilling and financially lucrative, but the process is more arduous than it appears.

## infinite possibilities

Tomb’s story had a happy ending. In addition to running his eponymous practice, he operates Infinite Fitting, a company that manufactures the sand-cast basins out of white or silicon bronze, brass, and aluminum. Tomb refined the earlier sink, making it more applicable for conventional installation (while keeping the spirit of the original). Although the company works with small local foundries, Infinite does the finishing and machining in its own shop.

Whitney Sander also got into the product biz by accident, when he moved to Los Angeles in 1999 and began designing his own house. “Because I had moved from another city, I didn’t have much of a client base here,” explains Sander, principal of Sander Architects. “I had all the time in the world, so I designed everything.” This included a resin sink that captured the imagination of visitors. As



Courtesy Infinite Fitting

Bruce Tomb turned his art piece for a gallery exhibit into the IF Basin, a full-scale product line that nicely supplements his firm’s bottom line.

more people asked for one of their own, Sander began producing them in quantity.

“At the time I was doing trade shows for my prefab Hybrid House, exhibiting at events such as CA Boom and Dwell on Design, so we put a sink in the corner [of our booths] and put a bunch of fliers next to it,” Sander recalls. “And folks started calling.” Sander partnered with a local fabricator for production, but his firm handled fulfillment and shipping. “We were turning

out 10 sinks a month at one point,” he says, “and at \$2,000 a pop, that was nice.”

While some architects and designers stumble into a manufacturing opportunity, others, such as Brooklyn, N.Y.-based 4-ply, make it part of their business model. “Furniture, in a way, has been integral to the firm since our first project,” says partner Jeffrey Taras. “It was an office space, for which we did the design and made all of  
*continued on page 64*



the furniture—24 desks and a conference table.” Eventually 4-pli started a sister company, Associated Fabrication, which makes the firm’s pieces.

## industrial strengths

Compared to a small architecture firm producing sinks and furniture, the operations of established industrial design firms are far more sophisticated. London-based Jake Dyson Ltd. is comprised of a team of product designers and design engineers whose sole task is “coming up with new product ideas that are visually stunning and go where no one has gone before in providing innovative, functional benefits,” says principal Jake Dyson, son of the well-known vacuum designer.



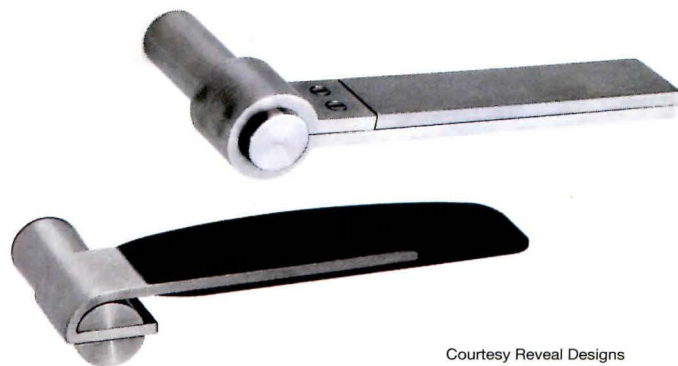
Courtesy 4-pli

4-pli offers furniture pieces, such as the Nesting Desk (above), that are customizable by size. Reveal Designs’ hardware—including (from top) the stainless steel BCJ Lever 1 by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson and the Bainbridge Lever by Cutler Anderson Architects—comes in a variety of standard and custom metals and wood species.

Dyson says his approach is to conceive a product and follow it through to the point of manufacture, which is “unusual in a world where product design typically is separate from the development and manufacturing side.” Having a “hands-on” approach to the process is essential, he adds.

But not all architects and designers have the time, money, or wherewithal to do this. Fortunately, companies such as Reveal Designs have emerged to fill the void. Founded in 2004 with the goal of licensing products designed by architects, Reveal discovered almost immediately that establishing manufacturing partners is hard. “It was very difficult getting things to move in a timely fashion,” says Scott Roskind, principal of the White Plains, N.Y.-based company. “So we started creating things on our own.”

Reveal works with such firms as Bohlin Cywinski Jackson and Cutler Anderson Architects to bring their architectural hardware and furniture to market. The beauty of working with Reveal, Roskind says, is that the architects aren’t encumbered by the business issues associated with doing so. The process is surprisingly simple. “I’ve literally had Jim [Cutler, FAIA] step off an airplane and say, ‘Hey, I drew something and I’m going to fax it to you,’” Roskind says. “We look at it with our manufacturer



Courtesy Reveal Designs

partner in the United States, get the sizing [and other details] right, and then we do a prototype.” Once approved, the product is manufactured and shipped to the company’s network of more than 50 high-end distributors. Each deal is different, but generally architects own the copyrights and patents on their work, and Reveal pays royalties on product sales.

## double down?

For those looking to go it alone, be forewarned: bringing a product to market is no easy task. Having the artistic acumen to design what people want is important, but a solid business plan, marketing talent, and lots of money are essential. “There’s a lot of behind-the-scenes business that people don’t see,” Tomb warns. “Manufacturing is a really difficult endeavor. It’s very capital-intensive.” Taras agrees, adding, “If you don’t have the ability to go out to furniture shows and market yourself and also have capital to do all that while you’re waiting to get orders, it’s going to be hard.”

Even the seemingly simple things can be tricky. Sander cites packaging as a prime example. Finding properly sized boxes and

fittings so his sinks wouldn’t arrive damaged or dysfunctional took a good deal of time to resolve.

Conquering such issues doesn’t necessarily guarantee success either. In Sander’s case, the sinks simply grew too expensive to produce. The manufacturer who was making them “kept upping his price as he saw they were selling,” Sander recalls. “The margins kept getting thinner and thinner, and we just couldn’t make [enough] money” to justify continuing, so he shuttered the sink business in 2007. “I was born to be an architect, not a product manager,” he says. “Making sinks became a drag.”

Tomb concedes that operating your own manufacturing arm is difficult and time-consuming, but with those obstacles come certain rewards. “It definitely has created challenges for the firm, and it’s taken a considerable investment,” he says. But “it also has paid back and [supplemented] our income.” And the long-term value of a limited-production, architect-designed objet in a client’s house? Priceless. **ra**

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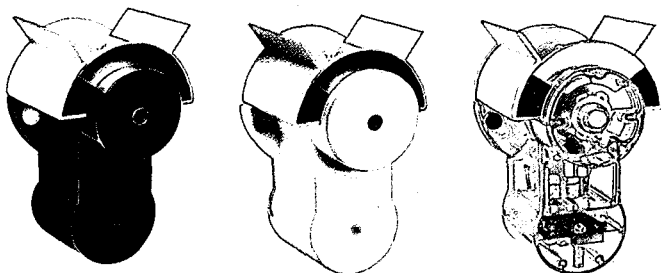
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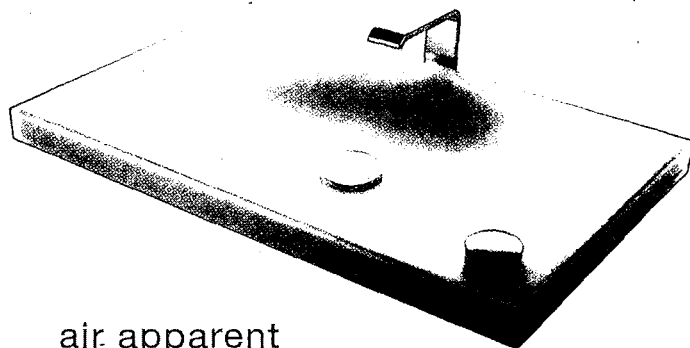


by nigel f. maynard



## motor skills

Sometimes an architectural element can serve as a sculptural piece with a practical use. London-based designer Jake Dyson—son of famed vacuum purveyor Sir James Dyson—believes his new wall-mounted Motorlight is such a product. Touted as the world's first variable-angle uplight, the highly unusual piece can be adjusted for ambient or spot lighting. A remote control (sold separately) adjusts a motorized shutter and spreads the light beam at angles ranging from 10 degrees to 120 degrees. It's distributed exclusively through New York City's The Conran Shop in black or white gloss or clear glow. Jake Dyson Ltd., 44.20.7713.0188; [www.jakedyson.com](http://www.jakedyson.com). The Conran Shop, 866.755.9079; [www.conranusa.com](http://www.conranusa.com).

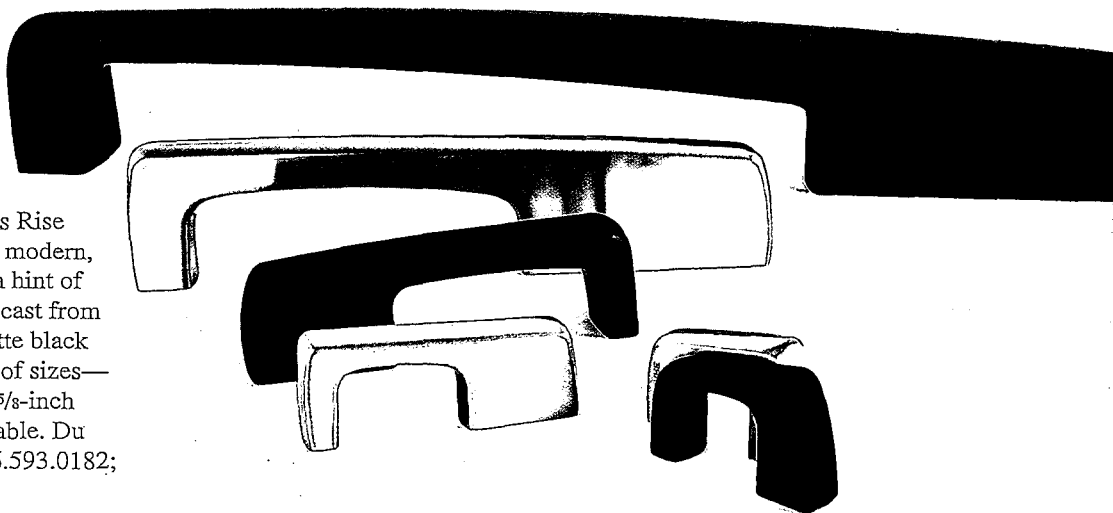


## air apparent

Made from LUMINIST, a hybrid epoxy resin, the Neorest II lavatory exudes an ethereal vibe. The material gives the sink the translucent qualities of glass, along with both heat and scratch resistance. The sink's embedded LED light glows blue, light purple, dark purple, and red to indicate water temperature variations, while its control knob adjusts flow from the spout. TOTO USA, 888.295.8134; [www.totousa.com](http://www.totousa.com).

## upward pull

The clean design of Du Verre's Rise cabinet hardware is decidedly modern, but its sweeping curves offer a hint of the organic. Each piece is die-cast from recycled aluminum with a matte black or satin nickel finish. A range of sizes—from 2-inch finger pulls to 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch extra-long handles—are available. Du Verre: The Hardware Co., 416.593.0182; [www.duverre.com](http://www.duverre.com).

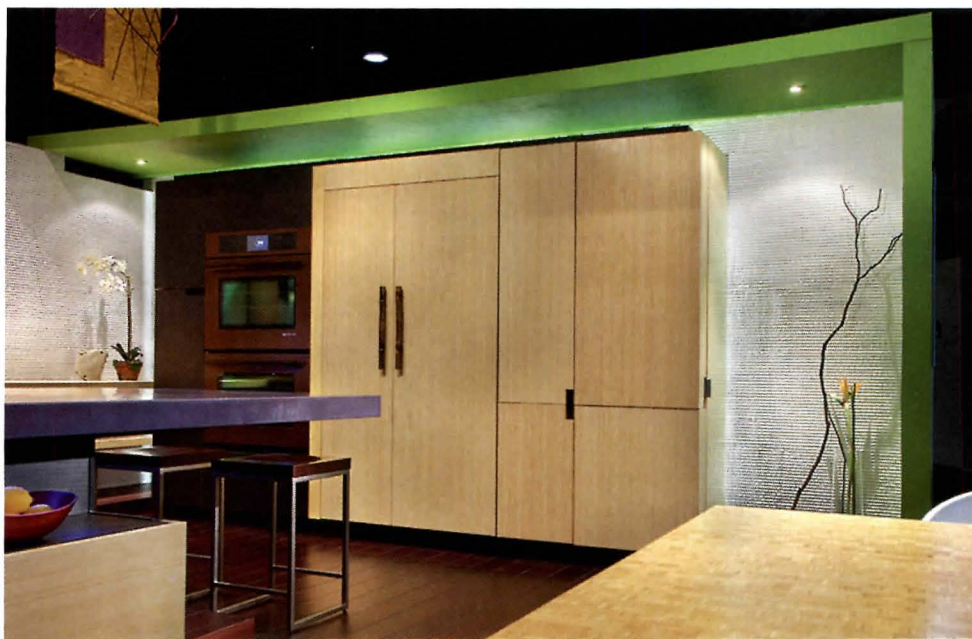


*continued on page 68*



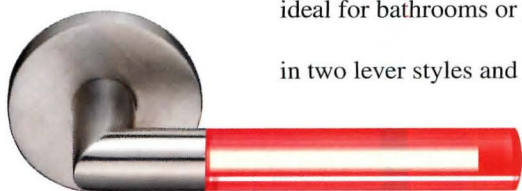
## elements of style

City of Industry, Calif.-based Tonusa says its “elements” line of modern kitchen cabinetry offers “elevated design at a moderated price.” Created by designer Fu-Tung Cheng as an alternative to high-end European systems, elements is comprised of flexible components and integrated accessories priced from \$180 to \$250 per linear foot. Pieces are manufactured from environmentally responsible raw materials, among them FSC-certified bamboo and wood. Tonusa, 626.961.8700; [www.tonusa.com](http://www.tonusa.com).



## bright idea

Emtek’s Brighthandle stainless steel levers boast acrylic handles that illuminate when the privacy function is engaged from the inside, making them ideal for bathrooms or powder rooms. Available in two lever styles and three acrylic designs—



including Aurora Fuse (shown)—the handle

operates on a single AA battery, which will provide up to one year of bright red illumination. Emtek Products, 800.356.2741; [www.emtek.com](http://www.emtek.com).



## flow going

Grohe’s streamlined Rainshower F-Series showerheads and body sprays help create a minimalist, contemporary bath. Features include balanced water distribution, an adjustable flow rate, and “Speed-Clean” nozzles for easy showerhead cleaning. The low-profile fittings are available in 5-inch, 10-inch, and 20-inch square configurations. Grohe America, 630.582.7711; [www.groheamerica.com](http://www.groheamerica.com).

FOR MORE PRODUCT INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.RESIDENTIALARCHITECT.COM](http://WWW.RESIDENTIALARCHITECT.COM) OR [EBUILD.COM](http://EBUILD.COM), HANLEY WOOD’S INTERACTIVE PRODUCT CATALOG.



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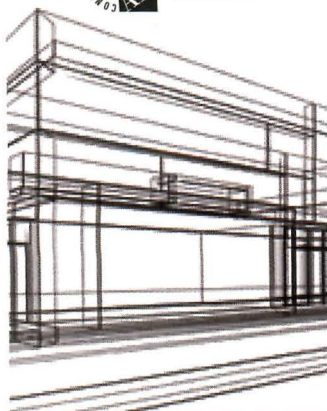
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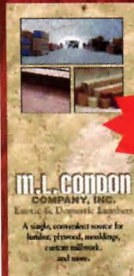
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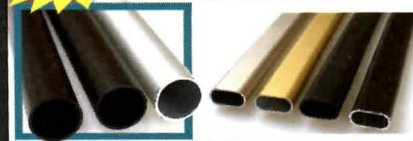


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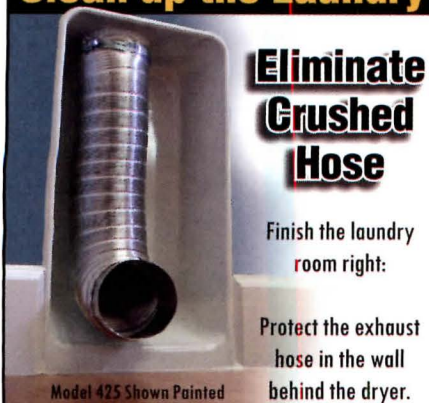
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Austin, Texas-based McKinney York Architects often weaves sustainable design ideas into its work. So when the 14-person firm moved into a building in the East Austin neighborhood last year, it worked hard to make the cost-conscious renovation as green as possible. "Where we were already going to have to spend money, we did it in the most sustainable way we could," says principal Heather McKinney, FAIA, LEED AP.

She and her partners focused in particular on lowering energy and water consumption, with a carbon-neutral office as their long-term goal. They replaced

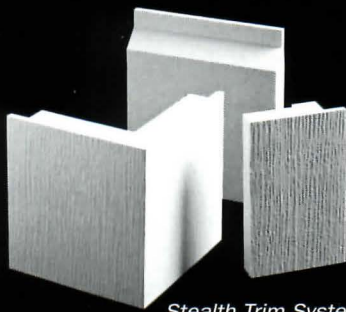
existing single-pane windows with low-E double glazing, which reduced street noise and heating bills. The bathroom features low-flow fixtures and super-efficient Dyson Airblade hand dryers. And McKinney says the firm hopes to eventually install solar panels on the building's flat roof.

McKinney York also considered the environmental impact of employees' commutes. The firm chose a location close to a rail station, making public transportation a convenient option. Additionally, it installed showers for staff members who bike to work.—*meghan drueding*



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